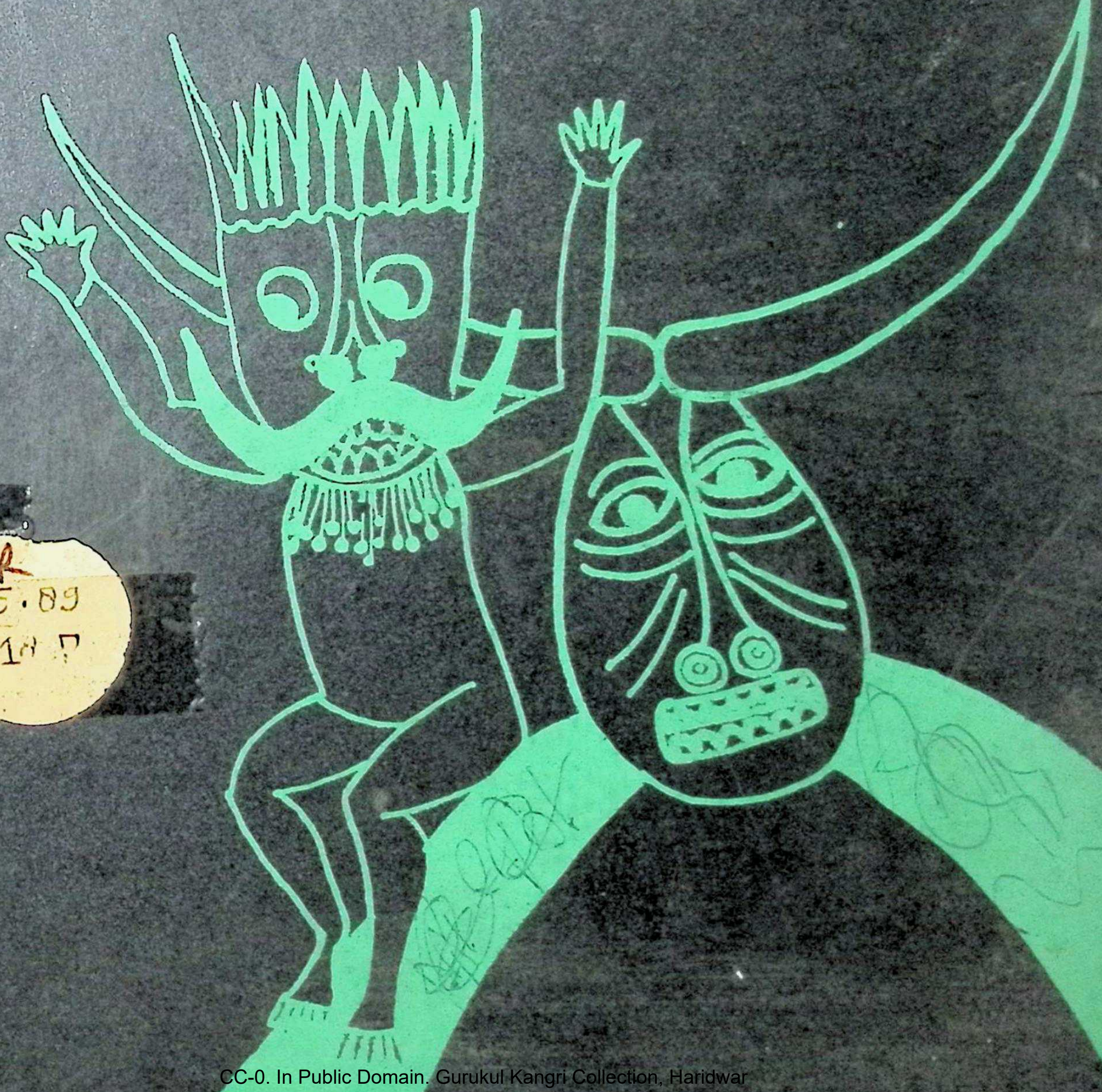
HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA

VOLUME THREE

FOLK MEDICINE

O. P. JAGGI



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पुस्तकालय

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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार

पुस्तक-वितरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है । इस तिथि सहित १५वें दिन तक यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापिस आ जानी चाहिए । अन्यथा ५ पैसे प्रतिदिन के हिसाब से विलम्ब-दण्ड लगेगा ।

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA

VOL. THREE

FOLK MEDICINE

by

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Preface

All of us have, at one time or another, heard of that ancient System of Medicine, the Āyurveda. But we do not know much about another type of medicine which is more ancient, more widely practised and equally efficacious—at least in the eyes of its adherents : Folk Medicine.

Folk Medicine was practised during the Atharvavedic Period ; it is still practised in the twentieth century. The tribal people all over India believe only in Folk Medicine ; it is predominantly practised by villagers, and even in the cities it has its adherents, particularly among the scheduled castes. More people in India believe in Folk Medicine than all the other Systems of Medicine taken together.

Folk Medicine has its own concepts about the causation of disease : wrath of gods, evil spirits, magic, witchcraft etc. It has its own diagnostic tools and techniques which lean heavily on divination. Treatment is based upon removal of the causative factor through the propitiation of gods, exorcism, counter-magic, use of charms and amulets, and, of course, administration of some herbal preparations —a perfectly rational approach in so far as it is intended to remove the basic cause.

In the History of Medicine in India, almost no attention has been paid to the practice of folk medicine. A few social anthropologists and social scientists, mostly foreigners, who have studied some tribal and village communities in general, have stated their findings in this regard. Much more needs to be done, or else the History of Folk Medicine in India will necessarily remain patchy and inadequate compared to what it is in some other countries of the West.

The study of Folk Medicine in India, serves a very useful purpose. Tribal and village people believe in Folk Medicine because it *fits in* with their culture and way of thinking. If they believe in evil spirits and magic, it must be remembered that it pervades their whole life and does not apply to their view of medicine only. If we think—they don't—that they can derive more benefit from the modern Medicine of the West which has lately made tremendous advances, then we will have to take pains to see that this Medicine is presented to them in such a way that it is 'acceptable' to them. We can make it 'acceptable' only if we know what they believe in and then project the modern Medicine in such a way that it does not contradict their beliefs. Gradually they will start believing in it and then they can be re-educated.

There is no vacuum in the villages and among tribal people so far as medical services are concerned : they have their own healers and specialists, who serve them well, and in whom they have complete faith and confidence. Mere provision of Government dispensaries would not solve the problem. That this is true is implicit in the statement often made by the Primary Health Centre doctors in the villages: "The village patient comes to us so late that we can hardly do anything for him."

The village patient will continue doing so, unless we understand his mental attitude, and it is here that a study of Folk Medicine truly serves its purpose.

A history of Folk Medicine from the earliest times is presented in the Introduction. Part I describes Folk Medicine as it is practised among the tribal communities, and Part II describes the practice of Folk Medicine in villages. Among tribal and village populations, one can still witness the practice of Folk Medicine as given in ancient manuscripts.

O.P.J.

Deepavali, 1972

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Thanks are due to the Publishers M/s. Atma Ram & Sons and R. K. Printers for their courteous co-operation in bringing out this volume.

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA

VOL. III

FOLK MEDICINE

Introduction

The practice of medicine among tribal people and villagers in India today, follows the same pattern it did two thousand years ago ; there is hardly any change. Wrath of gods, mischief of evil spirits and the magic of human beings formed the basis of medicine during the Atharvavedic period ; it still remains the basis of tribal and village medicine today. We can trace this medicine in ancient manuscripts such as *Atharvaveda*, Kautilya's *Arthaśastra*, and even in the Āyurvedic samhitas of Charaka and Śusruta, in the writings of Alberuni and the later Muslim and European writers.

ATHARVAVEDIC PERIOD

During the Atharvavedic period, it appears, there existed two main types of healing arts and their adherents : the first type largely depended upon incantations of magical verses and sacrificial practices to bring about cures; the second type, while using magical formulae, depended more heavily on the empirical or rational use of herbals and other medicaments. *Atharvaveda* states: "There are hundreds of medical practitioners and thousands of herbals, but that which could be achieved by a collective effort of them all, could be done singly by a charmed amulet".[1] This establishes the supremacy of magico-religious medicine during the Atharvavedic period.

It appears that in later times, the distinction between the above two main types of practitioners of the healing art, became more marked; the herbal doctor, in time, became the Āyurvedic practitioner who practised his sophisticated art among the people living in the cities and towns, while the practitioner of magico-religious medicine confined himself to the tribal and village populations : each fitting well into the cultural and social life of his own setting.

According to the *Atharvaveda*, committing a sin in the present or even past life, transgression of the normal divinely prescribed course of life, disrespect of the gods, witchcraft of the enemies and evil spirits of different types are some of the major factors that lead to different diseases. Different gods, singly or collectively, by themselves or through the agency of various demons, make man suffer for his wrongs. Hereditary diseases are caused as a result of sins committed in the past life by the patient himself or his ancestors.

Varuna, the cloud god could cause many diseases but the one particularly attributed to him is dropsy *i.e.*, the swelling up of the whole body. To get relief, a hymn in praise of the god was recited. A hut was made at a point where the two rivers come together. The dropsical patient was placed in this hut. An offering was made as the hymn was read. The patient was washed with three bunches of grass, which had been dipped in water. Rudra's special way of inflicting illness was to shoot arrows at the victims thus causing acute pains. Takman was the god that caused fever and propitiating him was one of the methods of getting rid of it.

Diseases in the *Atharvaveda* are constantly addressed to as demonical beings. Fever, a demon, who makes men sallow and inflames them like fire, is implored to leave the body, and is threatened with annihilation if he should not choose to do so. "O Fever", says another charm, "thy missiles are terrible; from these surely exempt us." Itch (*Paman*) is called fever's nephew. The malevolent spirits of disease were regarded as especially dangerous to children. Thus infants were liable to be attacked by Naigamesha, a demon with a goat's head. Disorders of the mind were generally attributed to possession of the body by a demon (*bhut*).[2]

Treatment of different diseases depended upon the views held about their causation : It was magico-religious coupled with some herbal preparations. In cases of leprosy, addressing a dark coloured plant, the priest-doctor chanted the following hymn : "The leprosy and the gray spots drive away from here; may thy native colour settle upon thee—the white spots cause to fly away ! The leprosy which has originated in the body and upon the skin, the white mark begotten of corruption, I have destroyed with my charm."

Treatment of jaundice by magic consisted in transferring redness to the patient from the red objects and creatures, notably from a red bull. An amulet consisting of a piece of bull's skin steeped in cow's milk and anointed with the dregs of *ghee* was tied around his neck. The patient was to drink milk and eat prescribed food, and the following hymn was recited :

> Upto the sun shall go thy heartache and thy jaundice: in the colour of the red bull do we envelop thee !
> We envelop thee in red tints, unto long life.
> May this person go unscathed and be free of yellow colour :
> The cows whose divinity is Rohini, they who, moreover, are (themselves) red (rohinih)—(in their) every form and every strength we do envelop thee.
> Into the parrots, into the *ropanakas* (thrush) do we put thy jaundice, and furthermore, into the *haridravas* (yellow wagtail) do we put thy jaundice.

The red colour of the sun and red cow are supposed to come to the patient's body and the yellow colour of jaundice is supposed to go to the birds of yellow colour.

The use of amulets was widely prevalent during the Atharvavedic period. An amulet, in the *Atharvaveda*, is looked upon as a weapon, an instrument, which protects the wearer against misfortune and disease. There are many hymns in the *Atharvaveda*, to be recited at the time of binding an amulet. It was a regular ceremony. The amulet was first steeped, for three days, in a mixture of curd and honey. At the time of its binding, the person stood behind the priest and touched him with blades of *darbha* grass. The priest recited the hymn and made an oblation of clarified butter (*ghee*). A little of this oblation he put upon the amulet and then tied it on the person and gave him curd and honey to eat.[3]

In the *Atharvaveda*, the vegetable products provide the largest number of amulets, and these produce a wide variety of effects. To obtain long life, amulets of the Pinus deodora or of rice and barley are employed; against consumption a *varana*-amulet is used ;[4] for the cure of excessive discharges, the head of a stalk of Saccharum munja ;[5] for the cure of hereditary disease, *ksetriya*, in the skin of a freshly-slain animal, is put powder of a plant supposed to destroy the *ksetriya,* along with brown barley with white stalks, blossoms of sesame, mud, and mud from an ant-hill, and this is bound on the patient ; for the cure of *jayanya* (venereal disease?), three pieces of fallen bark of Andropogon muricatus;[7] against the poison of serpents, Lagenaria vulgaris;[8] against worms in a child, a root of Capparis aphylla, Roxburgh;[9] against diseases believed to be due to possession of humans by demons, splinters from ten holy trees;[10] against an evil eye, seeds of barley;[11] to protect a pregnant woman from evils spirits, seeds of white and yellow mustard are employed.[12]

Animal products are also used as amulets in the *Atharvaveda*, though not as often as vegetable products. For *ksetriya*, an hereditary disease, an amulet consisting of the horn of an antelope is used;[13] for the cure of jaundice, an amulet made of the part of the hide of a red bull;[14] for acquiring wisdom, an amulet made of the tongues of three birds : the parrot, a certain species of crow and lark;[15] for long life, an amulet of ivory and elephant's hair wrapped with gold wire,[16] or an amulet consisting of hairs from the navel of a *snataka*, a lion, a tiger, a goat, a ram, a steer and a king, all pasted together and wrapped with gold wire,[17] or an amulet of pearl shells;[18] to promote verility, an amulet of the skin of a black antelope, fastened on with hairs from its tail;[19] to secure birth of a male child, an amulet is made from the wool of a male animal wrapped round pieces of Prosopis spicigera and Ficus religiosa.[20]

Iron, silver and gold are employed to obtain long life.[21] Of manufactured articles, a spear-point is used as an amulet against various sharp pains ascribed to the missiles of Rudra.[22]

Divination for disease or for some other occasion was also practised among people of the Atharvavedic period. The *Atharvaveda* mentions of foretelling the sex of the child by placing four fruits of the flax plant in the mother's hand, blessing them with a hymn, and pouring water over them. If they adhere to one another, the child will be a boy. Or the priest may whisper the same hymn over the son of a Brahmin and order him to touch the mother. If the name of the limb touched is grammatically masculine, the child will be a boy.[23]

The priest-physician of the Atharvavedic period had taken upon himself a much wider aspect of human life than merely alleviating suffering from disease; different hymns and charms of the *Atharvaveda* recited and employed for different purposes is an indication of that. We witness the same phenomenon in the case of the medicine-man in a tribal society today.

PERIOD OF CLASSICAL INDIAN MEDICINE

The Āyurvedic treatises of Charaka and Susruta did not and could not get rid of magico-religious concepts of medicine. The Uttara-sthana of *Susruta samhita* describes nine different diseases of children caused by nine malignant beings, the *grahas*.[24]

The Nine Grahas : There is a mythical story in connection with the origin of the nine *grahas* that attack children with different diseases. It states : When god Skanda was elevated to the leadership of the armies of heaven, some of the deities waited upon him and with folded hands asked him about the means of their subsistence. The god Skanda, in his turn, referred them to His Holiness, the God Siva, for the answer, whereupon they all went to the latter and made the same query. Siva Mahadeva replied : "Gods, men and other animals, O ye, *Grahas,* exist on the principle of reciprocal benefit. The gods minister to the wants of men and beasts etc. by marshalling different seasons of the year and by setting the air in motion and sending down the rain ; men, in their turn, propitiate the gods by duly and reverentially performing the sacrificial rites, by saying their prayers with folded hands, by bowing down in reverence. All the jobs have been filled and the emoluments distributed. You can, however, subsist on the lives of the infants—though what you receive shall be stained with the tears of many an anxiously watchful parent. Children of the families in which the gods, the *pitris* (ancestral spirits), the Brahmins, the pious, the teachers, the elders and the guests, are not properly worshipped and attended upon, and wherein the rules of cleanliness and virtues are not observed, and the members of which do not make daily offerings to the gods and give alms to beggars, and live on food prepared by others and eat from broken bowls and plates, would be proper persons whom you might strike with impunity, and by your malign influence lay them up with diseases peculiar to infant life. Then the parents of those children will worship you in their calamities and you shall get plenty to live upon. Thus the *grahas* came into being and began to attack the children of defaulting parents.[25]

In connection with the treatment of the disorders of infants and children, caused by these *grahas*, Susruta writes: The child should be kept in a clean and purified room and its body should be anointed with *ghee*. Mustard seeds should be strewn all over the floor by a clean person and a lamp of mustard oil should be kept perpetually burning therein. Libations of *ghee* alongwith herbs like *sarvagandha* and *sarvoushadhi* and flowers as well as sandal paste should be cast into the fire and kept continually burning while reciting invocations specific for each of the *graha* diseases. Which *graha* is causing a disease is told by a Brahmin. In the case of an attack by Skanda *graha* the invocation recited by the Brahmin is as follows:

> May Skanda, the eternal and changeless deity who is the receptacle of all sorts of energies produced by austerities, fame, valour, or organic combination (vital energy), be propitious to thee. May the almighty Guha protect thee from all evils—Guha who is the commander-in-chief both of the army of the gods and of the *grahas* and is the destroyer of the enemies of the army of gods. May he who is the begotten son of the supreme deity—the god of the gods and who acknowledges severally the exalted motherhood of Ganga, Uma and the Krittikas, give thee health and comfort. May the beautiful god who pierced with a single shaft right through the heart of the mountain Krouncha and who is effulgent with the red rays of his own divine person smeared with the paste of red sandalwood and decked with the garland of red flowers, protect thee from all perils.[16]

Similarly there are invocations for the other *grahas* such as Skanda pasmara, Sakuni, Revati, Putana, Andha-Putana, Sita-Putana, Mukha Mandika, Naigamesha. The invocations for each of these *grahas* mention the physical characteristics of these *grahas* and from that point of view are interesting; hence they are being given below:

> O thou, the trusted and beloved friend of the god Skanda, O Skandapasmara, O thou ugly-faced, one whom the world knows by the epithet of Visakha, may good befall this child in distress.[27]
>
> May the ever down-looking, sharp-beaked goddess, Sakuni, who (with her keen and far-seeing eyes) is decked with all sorts of ornaments and who traverses the ethereal sky in her flight, be propitious to thee. May the brown-eyed, fierce-looking, huge-bodied, large-bellied, and spike-eared Sakuni, who strikes terror into the heart of man with her terrible voice, be pleased with thee.[28]
>
> May the goddess Revati of dark complexion who is clad in multi-coloured garments and garlands of flowers of various colours and painted with anoinments of various kinds and with oscillating ear-rings, be pleased with thee. May the goddess, Revati, who is tall, drooping and terrible-looking, and who is the mother of many sons, be always propitious to thee.[29]
>
> May the slovenly shag-haired goddess, Putana, who is dressed in dirty clothes, and who loves to haunt lonely dwellings, preserve the child. May the fierce-looking, frightful goddess who is as black as a dark rain-cloud, who loves to haunt lonely and dilapidated human dwellings and whose body gives off filthy odours, protect the child from all evils.[30]
>
> May the dreadful, brown-coloured, bald-headed goddess, Andha-Putana, wearing a red-coloured garment be pleased to save this child.[31]
>
> May the goddess Sita-Putana, who is fond of the preparation of rice and *mudga* pulse, who delights in drinking wine and blood and who resides by the side of a river or a tank, preserve thee.[33]
>
> May the far-famed god, Naigamesha, the preserver of children, who has a goat's face, with moving brow and rolling eyes and who can assume different forms at will, preserve the child.[34]

Eight Categories of Supernatural Spirits. Besides the diseases caused among infants by the nine *grahas*, there are many other diseases of human beings, caused by super-human influences which *Susruta samhita* mentions in its Uttara-sthana. It says: Innumerable are the supernatural beings who roam about in the world, in quest of offerings or from an innate tendency for mischief and cruelty and choose their victims from among persons who are impure in body, mind and deed. Though possessed of various shapes and figures, these supernatural beings are mainly classified under eight groups or families : the *Devas* (deities) and their enemies, *viz*., the *Asuras, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Pitris* (manes), *Bhujangas* (Serpent-deities), *Rakshasas* (monsters) and *Pisachas* (filthy goblins).[35]

A person possessed by a *Deva* is clean, contented and vigorous. He speaks in good and pure Sanskrit, betrays a strong and decided liking for flowers and perfumes, grants boons, after the fashion of a divine being, to all and is devoted to Brahmins, and stares with a fixed gaze in his eyes. A person labouring under the influence of an *Asura* perspires copiously, speaks ill of the gods, Brahmins and preceptors, knits his brow with arched eyes, has no fear, becomes satisfied with all kinds of food or drink and exhibits vicious propensities. A person under the influence of a *Gandharva* moves about happily along lovely river banks, or in lonely forests, always clean in body and deed; he shows a fondness for songs, flowers and sweet scents, laughs merrily and croons sweet songs and dances. Copper-coloured eyes, partiality for wearing thin red garments, vigour and fortitude, repeated offers for granting boons or gifts to persons, taciturnity, restiveness, and gravity of mind are the symptoms which are manifested in a person coming under the influence of a *Yaksha*.[36]

A person similarly affected by a *Pitri* becomes calm and reverent towards the manes. He offers oblations of *kusa* grass and libations of water for their satisfaction, with the upper garment worn in a fashion so as to fall under his arm and exhibits a liking for cooked meat as well as sesamum, treacle and *payasa* (porridge). A person struck by the malignant influence of *Bhujanga*, sometimes moves on his breast along the ground like a serpent, always licks the corners of his lips with the tip of his tongue, becomes drowsy and shows a predilection for tracle, honey, milk and *payasa*.

A fondness for flesh, blood and various kinds of rank spirits, shamelessness, extreme cruelty, courageousness, irritability, extraordinary strength, a propensity to stir out in the night and an entire disregard for cleanliness, are the traits which mark a person attacked by a *Rakshasa* ; haughtiness, emaciation of the frame, roughness of behaviour, garrulousness, fetid smell from the body, extreme uncleanliness and restiveness, voracious eating, fondness for cold water and lonely places, stirring abroad in the night, fondness for walking about the outskirts of (forest) and roaming about weeping and engaged in vicious pursuits, are the features which show that a person has been possessed by a *Pisacha*.[37]

A *Deva* strikes a man at full moon, an *Asura* at the meeting of day and night *i.e.*, in the morning and evening twilights, a *Gandharva* generally on the eighth, and a *Yaksha* on the first day of the fortnights, a *Pitri* on the new-moon day; a *Bhujanga* on the fifth day of the new or full moon, a *Rakshasa* at night and a *Pisacha* on the fourteenth day of the fortnights.

These spirits imperceptibly enter into the body of the patient in the same way as an image imperceptibly enters into (the surface) of the mirror, as heat or cold penetrates into the body of an organic being and as the rays of the sun are collected in the crystal lens known as the *surja kanta* gem and as soul enters the body unseen.[38]

As regards treatment, *japas* (mental repetition of a *mantra* sacred to any deity), *homas* (offering of oblations to the gods) and other religious rites in accordance with the proper rules should be undertaken by a careful physician for their propitiation. Offerings of garlands of red flowers with red scents (such as red sandal paste, *kumkum* etc.), seeds (such as mustard, barley etc.), honey, clarified butter and all sorts of victuals, are the articles generally required for propitiation.[39]

As regards specific treatment for the above spirits, clothes, wine, blood, flesh or milk should be offered to them according to their respective likings. Offerings to the respective spirits should be made on the day corresponding to that in which they generally strike their victims. *Homas* in the fire with the offerings of *kusa*, *svastika*, cakes (*pupa*), clarified butter, umbrella and *payasa* should be made to the *Deva* in divine temples. To the *Asura* the offering should be made in the yard (*chatwara*) etc. of a house at dusk ; offerings to the *Gandharva* should be made with wine and the soup of wild animals in the midst of a gathering ; for a *Yaksha*, offerings should be made inside a house with the cakes of boiled *masha* pulse with blood, wine etc. The *Pitri* should be propitiated with offerings of *kusa* grass together with *madhavi* and *kunda* flowers on the banks of a river; offerings to the *Rakshasas* should be dedicated in lonely forests or at the crossing of two roads; while to the *Pisachas* cooked or uncooked flesh should be offered in a lonely chamber.[40]

This branch of medicine that deals with supernatural diseases—their origin and therapeutics—is called *Bhuta vidya*.

Divination. Samhitas of Charaka and Susruta do not lag behind in divination of the outcome of the disease in a patient through omens and dreams. This aspect of the practice of medicine is widely prevalent in all the tribal communities also.

Susruta says : "The physician should not be called in the following lunar asterisms : *Krttika, Ardra, Aslesha, Magha, Mula, Phrvaphalguni, Purvashada, Purvabhadrapada* or *Bharani;* and on the following days of the moon : the fourth, sixth, and ninth and the day of the new moon." In addition to celestial phenomena, all events of note, encounters etc., assume the role of portents, affording an insight into future fate. "The appearance, address, dress, and action of the messenger sent to call a physician, the star, hour, and lunar day on which he is called, the birds seen at the time, the residence, speech, and mental and bodily actions of the physician, all afford omens from which a favourable or unfavourable prognosis may be formed of the patient's illness."

It is counted as a happy omen if the messenger sent to fetch the physician is clean, dressed in white, is of the same caste as the sufferer and comes riding in an ox-cart. It is inauspicious if the messenger is of a higher caste, a eunuch or a woman, himself sick or afraid, if he comes running, if he wears shabby or dirty clothes, rides an ass or a buffalo, comes at midnight or mid-day or at the time of an eclipse of the moon or if he arrives when the physician is asleep or lies unclothed upon the ground.

Good omens are accidental encounters upon the road with a maiden, a suckling woman, two Brahmins, a running horse etc. Bad omens are: a snake, oil, an enemy, a one-eyed man etc.

Birds whose names have masculine terminations are happy omens if seen on the left by a physician on his way to the house of the patient; while birds whose names have a feminine ending, are auspicious if seen by him on the right. A dog or a jackal seen running from right to left is a happy omen and so is a mongoose or a *chasha* bird if seen on the left. A hare, a serpent, or an owl seen on either side of the road is an inauspicious sight. The sight and sound of a *godha* or a *krikalasa* (an animal of the lizard species) are both inauspicious.[41]

Particular attention is paid to the dreams of the patient. Both Charaka and Susruta describe such dreams and their significance in detail. Whoever (in his dream) goes toward the south (*i.e.* the region of death and malignant demons) his body anointed with oil or greese, seated on a camel, a tiger, a donkey, a bear or a buffalo, or whomever an old woman, dark-skinned, clothed in red, laughing and dancing with dishevelled hair (a terrifying aspect of Kali in her frantic dance, devouring her victims) drags toward the south, or whoever is embraced by spirits who are tortured in hell (evidently he is already in the company of the dead; they bid him welcome), or by ascetics (who have severed the bonds of earthly life and do not care whether their bodily frame carries on or dissolves), or whomever wild beasts with distorted faces sniff about the head (as if he were a corpse), or those who drink honey or sesamum oil (which form part of the offerings to the deceased) or whoever sinks into mud, or dances and laughs, his body smeared with mud (*i.e.* his appearance resembles a *bhuta* or ghost), or whoever is stripped of his clothes and wears a red garland on his head (like a delinquent facing capital punishment), or whoever grows a bamboo or a reed or a palmyra tree out of his breast (as though he were already turned into dust and formed part of the ground) or whoever is swallowed by a fish, or has intercourse with his mother, or whoever falls from the top of a hill, or into a chasm full of darkness or is carried away by a swift stream, or whoever grows bald or is overcome and bound by crows or similar animals, or whoever beholds stars falling from the sky, whoever sees a lamp extinguished or experiences the loss of sight, or whoever beholds the gods on their thrones or the earth shaking, whoever experiences vomiting or evacuation, or whose teeth fall out, or whoever climbs a cotton tree (*salmali* ; a region of hell is called after it), or a *kimsuka* tree (the red blossoms of which adorn the victim of the executioner) or a sacrificial post (to which the victim is fastened to be slaughtered), or whoever ascends an ant-hill, a coral tree, a *kovidara* tree in full blossom or a funeral pyre or whoever eats cooked food or drinks liquor (in his dream) ; if he be healthy he will contract a disease, and if he be diseased, he will die.

Certain dream symbols are associated with specific maladies : friendship and intimacy with dogs is related to fever, friendship with monkeys with consumption.

Auspicious people in dreams are gods, Brahmins, "twice-born" people of the three upper castes, living friends and kings ; a brightly burning fire, or flawless clear water, promise luck and the vanishing of disease. Meat, fish, fruit, white garlands and clothes indicate financial success and the vanishing of disease. If the dreaming person ascends stately terraces, climbs trees laden with fruit, mounts elephants and ascends mountains, this points to material gain and the vanishing of disease. If he reaches the crossing of streams, great rivers and oceans full of turbulent and muddy water, this is a sign of good fortune and the vanishing of disease. If a snake or leech or insect bites him, a clever man should interpret this dream as denoting freedom from disease, and gain of money. A patient who sees auspicious dreams of this kind may be diagnosed as possessing a long life (*dirghayus*), and the doctor should accept the treatment of the case.[12]

Similar lists of auspicious and inauspicious omens and dreams are given in *Charaka samhita*, *Bhela samhita* and other ancient treatises.

Artha Sastra : The *Artha Sastra* of Kautilya, a book which primarily deals with the governance of different aspects of life in the kingdom, also makes mention of a few magical formulae, performance of which can make a whole population fall asleep and cause blindness and death to the enemy. One or two of such magic formulae are as follows :

> Having fasted for four nights and offered animal sacrifice (*bali*) on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month, one should get a few bolt-like pieces prepared from the bone of a man put to death on the gallows. When one of these pieces is put in the faeces or urine [of an enemy], it causes [his] body to grow in size (*anaha*) ; and when the same piece is buried under the feet or seat [of an enemy], it causes death by consumption, and when it is buried in the shop, fields, or the house [of an enemy], it causes him loss of livelihood.

The same process of smearing and burying, holds good with the bolt-like pieces (*kilaka*) prepared from *vidyuddanda* tree. When the nail of the little finger (*punarnavam avachinam?*), *nimba* (Nimba melia), *kama* (bdellium), *madhu* (Celtis orientalis), the hair of a monkey, and the bone of a man, all wound round with the garment of a dead man, is buried in the house of, or is trodden down by a man, that man with his wife, children and wealth will not survive three fortnights.

When the nail of the little finger, *nimba* (Nimba melia), *kama* (bdellium), *madhu* (Celtis orientalis), and the bone of a man dead from natural causes are buried under the feet of or near the house of a man or in the vicinity of the camp of an army, of a village, or of a city, that man (or the body of men), with wife, children, and wealth will not survive three fortnights.

When the hair of a sheep and a monkey, of a cat and mongoose, of Brahmins, of low caste men (*svapaka*), and of a crow and on owl is collected, and is made into a paste with faeces (*vishtavakshunna*), its application brings on instantaneous death.[43]

MUSLIM PERIOD

When the Muslims came to India, they observed and described the beliefs of the Hindu people about the evil spirits that cause illness and misfortunes among them. These descriptions do not apply strictly to one section of the population, but indicate the belief of the people in general. Ali b. Rabban al Tabari composed a book entitled *Firdausul-Hikmat* (Paradise of Wisdom),[44] a book of Medicine describing different Systems of Medicine then prevailing in different parts of the world. In this, under the Indian System of Medicine, he wrote : "....The Indians say that these spirits mix and live with the people for many reasons : some of them, because they love meat and blood, or some because they love to be respected, or some because of love for the person with whom they mix. They settle down in lonely or a dark place, or in a place of prayer, which is ruined, or in a dome of a tomb in a grave-yard. They gain powers over the people, when they are not clean, or when they commit some sort of sin. They cause harm to the people during nights of full moon or in the nights immediately before full moon. One variety of spirits plays mischief on the people in the evenings or in the 'eight days' of the month. Their entry into the human body is just like that of sun-rays into a glass or a soul into the body. Some of the spirits carry out their peculiar activities such as causing mischief to the people. Sometimes, they seize the opportunities and take possession of the people, for instance, when a master curses his servant or a father curses his son and says, 'may a spirit catch hold of you or may a snake bite you'. (These spirits hear the curse and get hold of the cursed man.)

The signs of a spirit possessing the people are : One goes on licking his saliva, his veins of the neck will be abnormally pulsating, his sleep will be prolonged, he likes to ascend a mountain and run towards the lightning as if he wants to catch it. These spirits run away from the precious stones and the turbans made of rose and jasmine. There are some spirits who want something as compensation, and hence this is placed with some sort of scent in the abodes of prayer.... They have mentioned that if the spirit does not leave even after giving something as compensation, then, the following should be done : The hair and skin of the wolf are taken and pounded with garlic and asafoetida and mixed with the urine of forest goat and the whole thing is put on the fire, and its fumes are passed towards the man possessed by the evil spirit ; or *gingili* ginger, pepper, pepper in oil, red and yellow orpiment, hair of (the animals) the lion, tiger, bear, panther, cat, horse, cow, jungle rat, mongoose and deer should be collected, alongwith their biles and urine, and these are ground and then it should be placed on fire and its fumes should be directed towards the patient. Another kind of spirit is put to flight by mixing the fat of mongoose, cat, snake, hyena, bull, cow, mixed with their biles and baked with oil and then it is applied through the nose and massaged on the whole body. If all these articles are not available, some of them may be used. Another kind of spirit is sent away by the use of massage and sharp medicines such as purgatives.... Sometimes, sniffing of powdered mustard seed is recommended till the patient falls down on the ground. Sometimes snakes are sent to create fear or he is beaten by a stick or a fire is prepared around him and then the people pretend to put him into the fire. The treatment for those children who are attacked by these spirits of the dead is to take the feathers of eagle, owl and deer, along with some barley, *gogul,* fat and rice, and then the fumes of the mixture should be applied to the victims in the mornings and in the evenings. The jasmine or the baked or cooked rice, should be placed on the road, on which the bullock walks and the child and its care-taker should be bathed in a spot where the two rivers meet. Another kind of spirit which catches the children is treated by the fumes of excreta and the feather of the cock, skin of the snake and the rags of the people and medicines which act against poisons."

Ayeen Akbery by Abul Fazal Allami mentions some of the beliefs of the people about the causation and treatment of different diseases.[45] This description does not apply to a particular section of the people. According to it : "Headache is a punishment for having in a former state spoken irreverently to father or mother; cure: Let him make of two *tolahs* (appox 22 gms.) of gold the images of Kushup (Kasyapa) and Adit (Aditi), and considering them to be the representations of the father and mother of the Dewatahs, give them to the needy.

"Madness is a punishment for disobedience to father, mother, or peer; cure: Let him perform *Chanderayin* (*Chandrayana*) which is to eat on the first day only one mouthful, two mouthfuls on the second day and thus continue increasing a mouthful every day for a month, and then decreasing gradually a mouthful one each day till he leaves off as he began. Or let him make Kushup and Adit of two *tolahs* of gold, and give them to the poor. The epilepsy is a punishment for having administered poison to anyone, at the command of his master; cure: bestowing in charity two such images as last described, together with a cow, thirty-two seers of sesame seed, and repeating some incantations in the name of Mahadeo.

"Pain in the eyes is a punishment for having coveted another man's wife; cure: performing the fast of *Chanderayin*. Blindness is a punishment for having killed his mother. This person, before his new birth, will suffer many years' torments in hell; cure: performing the ceremony of *Pararajapatty* (*Prajapatya*), which is of five kinds: (1) bestowing in charity a cow; (2) or one *tolah* of gold; (3) or feeding twelve Brahmins; (4) or throwing into the fire ten thousand times a mixture of sesame seed, *ghee*, honey and sugar; (5) or going bare-footed to a temple for the distance of a *yojuna*. Or let him make boat after the following description: the boat of four *tolahs* of gold, the mast of silver, and six cars of copper and bestow it in charity. But if it should be punishment for having only acted in contradiction to the command of his father or mother, let him make the images of Kushup and Adit as described before. Dumbness is a punishment for having killed his sister; cure: let him form a cow of the following description: the body four *tolahs* of gold, the hoofs two *tolahs* of silver, the hump two or three *mashas* of copper. This with a vessel of brass for the milk he must give in charity and for one week eat nothing but a mixture of milk, curds, *ghee* and cow's urine and dung. The belly-ache is a punishment for having eaten with a person of a different religion or with a liar; cure: fasting three days and giving away in charity twelve *tolahs* of silver. The stone is a punishment for having committed incest with his mother; cure: performing the ceremony of *mudhoodheen* (*madhu-dhenu*), which is as follows: he must conceive in his imagination that the following articles form a complete cow, *viz.*, that four vessels, each containing one and a quarter maund, filled with honey, represent her body; one *tolah* of gold her mouth; four seers of sugar candy, her teeth; two pearls, her eyes; two pieces of lignum aloes, her horns; two plantains, her ears; wheat flour, her dugs; three seers of sugarcane, for each leg; a white woollen cloth thrown over the whole, her hide; skeins of silk, the tail. The hoofs of this cow must be of silver, and her neck be covered with two pieces of red cloth; in the front must be set a copper vessel; and eight seers of different kinds of grain formed into a heap. Near her must be placed a vessel full of honey to represent her calf, and copper vessels full of sesame seed. When these are completed, he must repeat certain incantations, worship them, and afterwards bestow them in charity. Lameness is a punishment for having kicked a Brahmin; cure: let him make one *tolah* of gold into the form of a horse and bestow it in charity; and give food to one hundred and eight Brahmins. A fever is a punishment for killing an innocent *Kehteree* (*Kashatriya*); cure: repeating one hundred times the incantation of Mahadeo, feeding thirteen Brahmins, and sprinkling with water the image of Mahadeo one hundred times. A cough is a punishment for killing a Brahmin; cure: making a lotus of four *tolahs* of gold, and after repeating certain incantations, performing with it the ceremony of *howm*, and giving it to a righteous Brahmin. Flux is a punishment for having killed his wife, without her having committed any fault; cure: performing the ceremony of *kishnajun* (*krishnajina*) which is spreading a deer skin, and laying upon it a heap of sesame seed, and one hundred *tolahs* of gold or more, repeating certain incantations, and performing the *howm*. It is considered as a very wicked action to accept of this charity. Asthma is a punishment for having accepted of *kishnajun*; cure: make a buffalo of iron, with horns of lead, and the forehead of stone. Load it with *keneer* (Nerium odorum) flowers, cover it with a black blanket, and give it in charity, together with three and half maunds of *mash* (Phaseolus mungo). Indigestion is a punishment for having robbed a house; cure: let him bestow in charity the following articles: a house and furniture; seven kinds of grain, of each thirty-two seer; a hand mill; a pestle and mortar; drinking vessels; a stove; a broom; a cow; and money according to his circumstances."

Thus we see that the belief in sins, demons and magic as the cause of diseases was deep-rooted and widespread in ancient India. While many people in the cities made use of the Indian System of Medicine, Āyurveda, a large majority of the population made use of a system of medicine which was a mixture of magico-religious medicine coupled with the use of herbals and other medicaments. These people lived in the villages where most of the people of India have lived all along in tribal communities.

While we do know that they made use of such a system of medicine—the Folk Medicine—we have no comprehensive written records. And yet we are not ignorant of them because in the last hundred years or so, anthropologists and sociologists, and others have observed and studied different tribal and village communities, and as they have hardly changed at all in their beliefs, customs and practices, their findings apply not only to the present but to all the past centuries. These communities have remained static while time passed them by.

This forms the largest source material of Medicine as practised by the tribal and village people.

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PART ONE

Tribal Medicine

1

Tribal People

TRIBAL PEOPLE WITH their traditional customs and culture, dance and music, arts and crafts, live—and like to live—in the mountainous regions or forests. They have lived there either from the beginning or retreated there under pressure of increasing habitation of land in other parts of the country. There are 212 Scheduled Tribes in India. Some of them are large, others very small. According to the 1961 census, they make a total of 3,01,722,21 out of a total population of 43,90,72,582 in India. Some of the States have large populations of tribal people in them; they are the maximum in Madhya Pradesh, being 66,78,410 in that State; in some of the other States their numbers are as follows: Orissa 42,23,757; Bihar 42,04,784; Gujarat 27,54,446; Maharashtra 23,97,159; Rajasthan 23,51,470; Assam 20,64,816; West Bengal 20,54,081; Andhra 13,24,368.

Physical characters, racial derivatives and the spoken languages of these tribal people differ widely; they are grouped together only because of their common way of life and beliefs.

They collect berries, tubers and fruits; gather honey, make strings and ropes, spin and weave, cut wood and sell fuel from the forests, hunt, fish, raise cattle, practice *jhuming* of forests for crude agriculture, terraced farming and settled agriculture; they work in mines or represent the labour in factories and plantations.

Different tribes live in different economic stages, ranging from hunting and food gathering to shifting and settled cultivation. Thus Birhor and Kharia in Bihar, Kuki and Nagas in Assam Hill, Maria in Madhya Pradesh, Koya, Paliyan, Kadar in Madras and Andhra, the Jaung in Orissa, they all live mainly by hunting and gathering. The Naga tribes in Assam, Maria and Gond in Madhya

Pradesh, Khond, Gond, Saora in Orissa, they all live mainly by shifting cultivation. The Tharu in Uttar Pradesh, Munda, Ho, Oraon and Santhal in Bengal and Bihar, Khasi in Assam, Badaga, Kota, Irula in Madras, Bhil and Gond in Maharashtra and Gujarat, they all live essentially by settled agriculture. Those who live by hunting and gathering are in a poorer economic condition than those who live by settled agriculture or are labourers in the factories or on tea plantations.

In social organisation also, there is a wide range of variation from tribe to tribe. Garo and Khasi in Assam are matriarchal, while Munda, Santhal and many other tribes are patriarchal. Some tribes like the Onge go about practically naked, the Saora women go about with bare torso, while the Bhuiyan and the Gond have regular dresses. It must, however, be admitted that the majority of the tribes live in extreme poverty, and illiteracy among them is almost total.

On the basis of territorial distribution, some of these tribes may be classified as follows :[1]

Assam and adjoining Hill States : Garo, Lushai Kuki, Mikir, Abor, Dafla, Angami Naga, Sema Naga, Chang Naga, Lota Naga, Konyak Naga, Khasi.

Bengal and Bihar : Polia, Maler, Oraon, Santhal, Munda, Ho.

Orissa, Madras and Kerala: Khond, Saora, Chenchu, Lambadi, Sugali, Kota, Badaga, Parja, Irula, Toda, Paniyan.

Bombay, Gujarat and Rajasthan : Bhil, Katakari, Koli.

Madhya Pradesh : Gonds (Muria, Bhotra, Parja), Baiga, Koya and Korku.

Andhra : Gonds (Maria, Muria and Raj Gonds), Bhatra, Dhruva, Gadaba, Chenchu.

Uttar Pradesh : Tharu, Bhoksa, Khasa, Korwa, Biyar, Bhuiya, Majhi, Chero, Kharwar, Raji.

Punjab : Sikligar and Sansi.

Andaman, Nicobar Islands : Jarawa, Onge.

On the basis of the languages spoken by the tribal people in India, many of the tribes can be classified under three broad groups: (1) Those belonging to the Tibeto-Chinese linguistic family; these are Nagas of Assam, Garo, Kuki, Mikir, Dafla, Abhor and Khasi. (2) Those belonging to the Austro-Asiatic linguistic family; these are Munda, Ho, Santhal, Kharia, Khorwa, Gadaba. (3) Those belonging to the Dravidian linguistic family; these are Oraon, Maler, Khond, Saora, Parja, Koya, Paniyan, Chenchu, Irula, Kadar, Malser and Malaryan.

While the tribal people have some common characteristics of culture, they differ one from the other in many ways depending, to a large extent, upon their geographical location and the influences they are exposed to. A familiarity with their way of life and beliefs will help us to understand better, their practice of medicine.

With regard to the distribution of tribal people in the different states, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the different tribes are not strictly restricted to the areas indicated above, and many of them live in adjoining states and regions as well.

ASSAM AND ADJOINING HILL STATES

Tribes living in the mountain valleys of the North-eastern frontiers of India in Assam, Nagaland etc. include among them different Nagas, Khasi, Lushai, Kuki etc. By and large, they are in considerably higher stages of development and can by no means be called primitive.

The first thing that strikes a visitor in any part of these hills is the magnificence of their natural scenery and the attractiveness of the people, because of their simplicity, cheerfulness, hospitality, vitality and colourfulness.

Physically these tribes are Mongoloid with light skin, straight hair and flat nose. Their eyes give the appearance of being half open with the upper fold of the eye-lid covering partially or wholly the inner angle of the eye. The majority of the tribes are of medium stature with long heads, but some among them have round heads and faces. All these tribes, including their womenfolk, are muscular. They are great mountaineers and can carry considerable loads to high altitudes along difficult trails. They are healthy, hardworking and of independent spirit. Their life is well balanced, like that of hill people in general; they do strenuous work and then enjoy healthy relaxation. Among these tribes, the blood group characters are unlike those of the other aborigines of India; they have a more equitable distribution of A, B and O.

Nagas: A large part of the Naga tribe is the Angami community. Their culture is considered far superior to that of the other members of the Naga group. The Angamis grow their rice on terraces dug out from the hillsides with great skill and labour, and water them by means of channels excavated for long distances along the contours. Rice growing is impossible in the elevated country which they occupy without artificial irrigation. Cotton, rice and millet, are grown on the same fields. Spinning and weaving are occupations of the womenfolk.

The entire organization of the Naga tribe is, however, based on a war-footing. The village is built on the spur of a mountain on a vantage point for defensive purposes against constant attack from enemies. These villages are designed to protect the inhabitants from the attacks of hostile tribes; each village has a fortress situated at an eminence, the houses being massed together without much attempt at arrangement. The whole settlement is guarded by an almost impenetrable fence of thorny shrubs and stinging nettles. Narrow sunken paths give entrance to the enclosure. The actual gateway is protected by a strong wooden door. The Chief's house occupies the most elevated and central position in the village.

Among many of the Nagas, head-hunting has been a characteristic feature. This was an outcome of their belief in what is known as the 'Soul Force' or the idea that in addition to the gross matter which constitutes the body, there is a finer substance which gives life and vigour to the individual and which is of given quantity in a particular locality or community at a particular time. If the quantum of 'Soul Force' decreases, the harvest would be poor and diseases would occur. To guard against such a situation, additional 'Soul Force' has to be procured. This can only be done through head-hunting and by keeping the skulls in the house to augment the decreased 'Soul Force' of the particular family or community who happens to be in need of it.[2]

The desire for taking heads was felt strongly by the younger generation. This, to a certain extent, depended also on the fact that at the village festivals the young women would laugh at the young boys who had no heads to their credit. Any head counted, be it that of a man, a woman or child, entitles the man who took it to wear certain ornaments according to the custom of the tribe or the village.

Among some of the Nagas, if a member of a family is drowned, crushed by a tree, or killed by a wild beast, the members of the household abandon their house. Every thing they possess is burnt and they keep only enough clothing to cover their nakedness. They wander in the jungle for a month, after which the wrath of the gods is supposed to be mitigated and the purification ceremony is considered completed. When they build another house, a new place is selected.

Khasis : They are a matriarchal tribe of Assam and like many other tribes in these parts, they are divided into various sub-groups. The Khasis are mainly concentrated in the Jaintia and Khasi Hills, and also in Shillong. They cultivate the hill sides and terrace cultivation is the rule but it is done only in the flat valleys.

The Khasis today live in the District of Khasi and Jaintia Hills. They are light-hearted and cheerful in disposition. Hunting, fishing and archery are their main forms of recreation. They number over 300,000. Some of them are highly educated and serve as college professors, teachers, doctors, and nurses in the state of Assam.

Kukis : They live in the Lushai hills in Assam and are known by various clan names. They number over 100,000.

The Kuki villages consist of tiny settlements in the jungles, of four or five huts at a place, built of bamboo and cane. The forests they inhabit are thickly covered by bamboo bushes; so thick is their growth that at certain places it is difficult to find a path even in broad daylight. The Kukis have perfectly adapted themselves to their environment. They use bamboo for almost all their needs; they have bamboo roofs, walls and floors for their houses; cages for the birds are made of bamboo; they have bamboo tubes for carrying and storing water which the Kuki women carry over long distances. Their baskets, mats, tobacoo pipes, nets for fishing, traps for animals, weaving apparatus, and musical instruments are made of bamboo; even the container for the oven is made of bamboo. Green bamboo shoots are considered a delicacy.[3]

Kuki clans practise *jhum* cultivation.[4] They put fire to a jungle tract and clear the space, cultivate it for a year or two and then abandon it for another tract where they pursue a like process. When they clear the jungle for *jhum*, they leave one tree in the middle as a resting place for the tree-spirit. When the harvesting season arrives, they offer sacrifice and prayers to the spirit believed to be residing on this solitary tree, as otherwise their efforts may not be rewarded with a bumper harvest. After the seeds are sown when the monsoons arrive, the Kukis get themselves completely drenched because they believe that such a soaking is good for the crops. When the crop is ready, the Kukis carry home only as much as they require for the interval between two harvests; the remainder of the crop is left for domestic cattle. Even of this crop, the major portion is utilised for brewing liquor, of which they take huge quantities.

Garos : They inhabit the Garo Hills District on the Western extremity of Assam adjoining the Mymensing District of East Pakistan. Besides, there are large groups of Garos in the contiguous plains of the Districts of Goalpara and Kamrup in Assam. The population of the Garo Hills District is just over 300,000.

The most distinctive feature of Garo and Khasi societies is their matriarchate. It is the husband who, after marriage, has to go and live in his wife's house and not *vice versa*. Property is inherited by the youngest daughter. Among the Garos, when the son-in-law comes to live in his wife's parents' house, he becomes his father-in-law's *noksom i.e.*, a kind of representative of the father clan. After the death of his father-in-law, the *noksom* marries the widowed mother-in-law, thus becoming the husband of both mother and daughter. All the other hill tribes are patriarchal. The Lushais, Zemi Nagas and Kukis have to buy their wives by paying a marriage price. The price is calculated in terms of a number of *mithans* (wild bulls or cows). If divorce takes place as a result of a lapse on the wife's part, her father has to return the marriage price. Divorce is easy to obtain amongst all the tribes.[5]

BENGAL AND BIHAR

Of the tribes that live in Bengal and Bihar, the important ones are the Oraon, Santhal, Munda and Ho.

Santhals : They are from the state of Bihar but now they have spread to different parts of the country: Santhal Parganas, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Manbhum, Hazaribagh and Singbhum in Bihar ; Birbhum, Bankura and Midnapore in Bengal. They number around 3 million and are one of the largest tribes in India.

The complexion of the Santhals is tanned black. They wear scanty clothes and live a hard, laborious life. They are fond of playing the flute, dancing and singing. They live mainly on agriculture and rearing of cattle. In every Santhal village, there is a headman who exercises great influence and there is a village *panchayat* as well. The Santhals grow and eat rice. Education is practically absent among them. They believe in a Supreme Deity, called variously as Thakur Jiu, Sin Bonga or Dhorom.[6]

In West Bengal and Assam, many of them serve as labourers in the tea gardens, a profession they have been engaged in for many decades. Nowadays, thousands of them work in the factories as wage earners, mostly in Tatanagar, an industrial town in Bihar.

Hos : They are concentrated in the Kolhan, in the district of Singbhum. The total number of Hos is more than half a million and of this number nearly one-half is found in the Kolhan.

Birhors : They are a nomadic tribe in Chota Nagpur. They belong to the same racial stock as the Hos and Mundas. They are found mostly in the Ranchi District.

The Birhors live by manufacturing ropes from creepers. Monkey-catching is a favourite pastime with them; they have developed great skill in catching monkeys with indigenously manufactured nets and traps. The nomadic section of the Birhors leave one settlement and move to the next whenever a death occurs; the village *Baiga* (medicine man) leads the people to new sites where he propitiates the village deities so as to receive their sanction before the people settle down there. Death is an occasion for great celebration among them; the body is interned alongwith an earthen pot containing rice and pulses and care is taken to minister periodically to the spirits of the departed.[7]

Kharias : The hill Kharias who are confined to the inhospitable hills of Mayurbhanj in Orissa, Dhalbhum (Singbhum) and Barabhum (Manbhum) in Bihar, have not come in much contact with outsiders. Their country does not afford much scope for an easy life and they are constantly faced with the problem of food supply. In their efforts to subsist, they have developed some implements and techniques of food-production. The iron ores in their hills provide them with material for the tools and implements that are required for hunting, fishing, lumbering, and house-hold purposes. The shells of gourds and the barks of certain trees provide them with containers for storing grain and water; large leaves provide them protection against rain and heat; bamboos provide them with material for making roofs, walls and beds. They make ladders of bamboo on which they climb to collect honey.[8]

The hill Kharias practice *jhum* cultivation in certain places but this does not meet their entire needs of subsistence. Honey, fruits, edible tubers and trapped birds supplement their meagre produce from the fields. The men go out into the forests for days, even weeks, during which the women manage the household and look after the children. Rice is their staple food, but the Kharias cannot afford rice every day and those who can, are considered extremely fortunate. They brew a kind of rice beer and this is prepared with all the customary rituals, the first drops being offered to the ancestoral spirits.

Those of the hill Kharias, who live near villages situated at the foot of the hills, sometimes secure work as day labourers, but they usually receive their wages in kind ; they prefer rice to money as wages.

The size of the Kharia settlements differs according to their cultural stage. The hill Kharias live in groups of five or ten families, in huts scattered over the hillside at distances of a hundred yards or more, but the more advanced Dhelki Kharias live in regular villages with sacred groves, dancing arenas and village burial grounds. The Christian Kharia villages are neat and compact, with better built houses. They build rectangular houses which they partition into sleeping and cooking apartments.

The hill Kharias even now make fire by the stick and groove method; match boxes are a luxury to them. A small flat piece of wood in which a hole has been drilled is held firmly under the feet and a stick is inserted into the hole to allow a rotatory movement; the friction produces fire and this ignites the leaves placed below the piece of wood.

ORISSA, MADRAS, KERALA AND ANDHRA

The important tribes of this area are Saora, Toda, Kota, Badaga, Chenchu, Yanadi, Irula and others.

Saoras : They are concentrated mainly in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Madras and Bihar. They number about 400,000 in these states.[9]

The Hill Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput in Orissa live under very primitive conditions. They engage both in terrace and *Jhum* cultivation. The men put on long brightly coloured loin cloths and the women wear hand-woven brown bordered skirts, keeping the upper parts bare. Saoras retain their own dialect and very few of them manage a second language.

A Saora village consists of long rows of houses along streets built on the slope of the hill. The streets are awfully filthy. Around the village are grown tobacco, maize and ginger. Nearby is the burning ground and groups of menhirs. The shrines for gods and ancestors are situated along the street. Sago and date palms grow all around. Inside, the house is neat and clean but dark and stuffy. It has a low ceiling and the burning wood makes it terribly smoky, so much so that one can hardly stand and breath inside a Saora house. Every house has a store of old clothes and ornaments belonging to the dead; they are not to be used because the dead ancestors like to see them sometimes. While the children and adults may shiver in the cold, they do not and cannot touch these clothes for fear of annoying dead ancestors.

The Saoras take rice and millet gruels, meat, crab, lot of chillies, *chutneys*, and they are fond of drinking palm tree wine. Edible herbs, leaves, berries, plumps and other forest fruit, they take in plenty. There are more young people among them than old. They are hard workers and earn more, but much of it they spend on religious and superstitious ceremonies, of which they have plenty.

Marriage is simple among them; it is full of feasts and rituals. The bridegroom gives presents to the bride's parents. A widow is expected to marry her husband's younger brother; or one of an elder brother's sons, if there are no younger brothers. If she marries someone else, compensation must be paid to the husband's brothers. Divorce is simple, though it is not considered respectable. Parents are devoted to the children and family life is generally happy. The people sing at their work, there is laughter in the fields, the children play about merrily. The Saoras do not migrate from their own to other villages.

The Saoras use bows and arrows, knives and axes for hunting. Their musical instruments are the drum, the ordinary tomtom and brass bells. The men are good dancers, the girls line up in rows behind the male dancers and keep step. In general, however, the Saoras are not very gay or friendly and they are usually found to be reserved, suspicious, and even obstinate.

The early history of Saoras is shrouded in the mists of legend and can only be glimpsed through vague hints and obscure references. But what evidence there is, suggests that they composed, at one time, a powerful tribe; indeed they were so important that they are among the few tribesmen who are mentioned by early western geographers. There can be little doubt that they are the Suari of Pleny and the Sabaroi of Ptolemy. It is believed that at one time they were distributed right across middle and eastern India, and at least during the period 800 B.C. to A.D. 1200, they were the dominant race of aboriginals. In the Middle Ages, there are repeated references to Saora chiefs and generals. The Saoras lived under their own chiefs down to a fairly recent date.

Todas: They live on the undulating plateau of the Nilgiri hills in scattered little villages. Of the various tribes inhabiting these hills, the Todas excited the greatest interest of the anthropologists because they are so different from all the other tribal people by whom they are surrounded. Many of their customs are unique. They number just about 600, and their number is declining partly because of disease and sterility and partly because of their custom of infanticide.[10]

The Todas are a purely pastoral people limiting their activities almost entirely to the care of their buffaloes, which they do very ritualistically.

They are a picturesque, proud and aristocratic people, the traditional lords of the Nilgiris. The Toda men with flowing hair and beards, their mantels covering their bodies from neck to feet, always impress visitors by their dignified bearing and robustness. Toda men average 5′-7″ and women 5′-1″. They are robust in build, their skin is brown; lighter than that of the other south Indians.

The Todas dread the sorcery of the Kurumbas more than that of their own sorcerer (*pilikoren*). They believe that the socery of the Kurumbas is much more dangerous and cannot be remedied. If it is found that a Kurumba has made a man ill, the only thing to be done is to kill the Kurumba. The belief in the magical powers of the Kurumbas probably arose from the fact that the slopes of the hills on which the Kurumbas lived were extremely malarious and it often happened that a visit to a Kurumba village was followed by an attack of fever of a severe kind.

Two other tribes, the Kotas and the Badagas, occupy the plateau with the Todas and the peculiar relations between the three tribes are among the most interesting features of the social life of the Nilgiris.

Kotas: They were traditionally the artisans such as smiths, potters, wood-workers etc. of the region. Their villages are interspread among the settlements of the Toda and the Badagas. The Kotas have always done some cultivation and have adequate lands of their own around each of their villages. In recent decades, they have had to rely more heavily on cultivation for a livelihood, since their handicrafts are no longer in great demand among their neighbours.

Kota men possess a strong sense of their worth and independence. They argue with great vigour, but the arguments are almost always on the verbal level only; rarely does a Kota come to physical aggression or attempt magical manipulation. They try to defend themselves and hardly ever get offensive. While the Kotas number about a thousand, the Badagas are more than 50,000.

There are other tribes besides the Todas, Badagas and Kotas in this region. Their life centres round hunting and food gathering as they have not yet developed a settled community life but wander from one place to another in quest of food. With the simple implements in their possession, namely, a digging stick and a bill hook, they collect edible roots, tubers, honey and fruit of the chase, such as birds and small animals, which constitute their chief means of subsistence. It is not known what language they originally used. They now speak corrupt forms of the Dravidian languages, such as Malayalam, Tamil, Telgu or Kanarese, according to the nature of the territory they occupy and the people with whom they come into contact. Physically they are of short to medium stature, deep chocolate brown in colour, and with broad flat noses and thick lips. The head is long and the body well-developed. In the interior of the hills, especially among the Kadaras, Irulas and the Pulayans, there is present distinctly frizzly or spirally curved hair similar to what is seen among the Melanesian tribes but not of the peppercorn type found among the Andamanese tribes. It is interesting to note that in some characters of the blood, such as the sickle-cell trait, they closely resemble the Melanesian and East African Negro tribes. At the present time, they are greatly intermixed and it is only deep in the interior that the more archaic types are to be found.

Kadars : Kadar means forest-dweller. The Kadars of Cochin live in the interior forest tracts. Generally they are amiable and not aggressive. They live in huts, 15 or 20 of which are grouped together to form a village. In the past, they lived chiefly on jungle roots and tubers. They are not vegetarians and like all sorts of game and fish. They do not touch the bison and the bear, whether living or dead. They are fond of honey and the honey-gathering season is a happy time for them.

The Kadars are engaged in the collection of minor yields of the forest like honey, wax, cardamom etc. They also help in *Khedda*, the elephant-catching operation. They consider the cultivation of land a sheer waste of time.[11]

Chenchus : They are located in the former Hyderabad state in the hill-range densely clad with forest and infested with wild animals. They live in aggregates of huts, each aggregate (*penta*) consisting of 15 to 25 huts. They wander about in a tract of a few square miles gathering honey and berries and digging up roots. The only equipment the men have is the bow and arrow. Their food consists mainly of roots and berries. The *mohva* flower provides both food and drink. Animal flesh is also taken when available The Chenchus are noted for their truthfulness and honesty. They are also kind and hospitable. They have not learnt the art of agriculture but they do know how to domesticate goats and raise poultry. Dogs are their pet animals. [12,13]

Yanadis : They have their principal habitat between river Ponneri in the extreme south and river Godavari in the north; the western boundary is the eastern ghats and eastern the Bay of Bengal. The Yanadis are largest in number in the district of Nellore. Their population throughout Andhra state and the Chingleput district in Tamil Nadu is around 200,000. They are gradually shedding off their nomadic habits and now live in or on the outskirts of villages.

He is tall in stature, bony in structure, somewhat dark in complexion, his ringed unkempt curly hair tied behind in bunch, his beard scanty and straggling, his cheek bones prominent, with bright milky transparent eyes, negligible moustache, lanky legs and rather thick lips. He wears just a rag passed between his legs for clothing, the ends of which hang in front and behind to the length of a span or two. With a palmyrah-leaf fish-basket hanging by his loin's string, a crude bamboo fishing-rod resting on his shoulder, he roams about along water courses or ponds catching fish all day long.[14]

Yanadis even in old age are known to walk erect, cover long distances in a swift trot and keep naturally dark hair and retain eye-sight and digestive organs unimpaired. Their joints are springy, teeth white and strong, and feet nimble and active. Similar features are noticeable among the Santhals. Both Yanadis and Santhals eat rats, and it is believed that it is the rat meat that keeps them active and healthy.

The Yanadis are generally employed only on running errands and they are regarded as fit for nothing else. In exchange for their services they get only rice gruel which quite satisfies them. If they have not performed a job satisfactorily and are rebuked, they generally don't get offended.

The Yanadis speak Telugu. They believe in an all-powerful God, but they gladly undertake an arduous journey with wives and children to a popular mosque or to a temple in order to get cured of an affliction or to ask for a son or daughter.

MAHARASHTRA, GUJARAT AND RAJASTHAN

The Bhils form the largest group in these areas; others being Dubla, Dhodia, Naika, Naikas, Gamits, Dankas, Grasias etc.

Bhils : They form the third largest group of aboriginals found in India. Their population, numbering over two million odd is spread over the central uplands of the Indian peninsula, the bulk of it being in the region covered by the forest clad mountain trinity of the Vindhyas, the Sahyadris and the Satpuras. The Bhils are the largest of the aboriginal tribes in the state of Gujarat, being 850,000 in that state.[15]

In a Bhil village, each house stands at some distance from the next. They are situated strategically on the top of a knoll, or on a slope with the jungle close behind. Bhils like to have a clear view over the approaches to their home. Each village consists of anything from a dozen to a score of huts, straggling over the whole of a side valley. A village has a *mukhi* or headman, who represents a village in all its dealings with external authorities. Traditionally they graze cattle and some of them raise a crop of maize or wheat.

The bearing and manners of Bhils are noticeably more confident and care-free than those of the poor peasants of the plains. They regard themselves as their own masters and they are always ready to give proof of this by defending themselves in an emergency with weapons which seldom leave their hands. They are an exuberant people, unburdened with care for the future, ready to enjoy a meal, a song or a dance whenever the occasion arises. Every man carries characteristically a bamboo flute as well as a weapon at his side.

The Bhils have been in contact with Hinduism for a long time and even though they believe in Hindu gods and goddesses yet their outlook is essentially animistic. Belief in magic and witchcraft is universal among them. If anybody falls ill without a clear cause, the medicine-man (*badwa*) is called into discover the origin of the illness and to drive away the evil spirit.

Dhankas : They form the most advanced and picturesque tribal community, numbering over 32,000. They are scattered over Broach, Baroda and Panchmahals.

Light dark in colour, an average Dhanka is 5′-3″ tall. According to popular belief they originated from Chauhan Rajputs. It is said that one of their earlier chiefs Patai Raja was a devotee of the goddess Amba and when the goddess was pleased with him because of his deep devotion, she expressed a wish to give him what he wanted. The king asked her to become his wife. The goddess became so furious with this demand that she cursed him saying he would perish with all his kingdom and relatives. Later, in a battle with Muhammad Begda, the emperor of Ahmedabad, he was killed; his soldiers fled and took shelter in the forests and fields and fed themselves on *dhan* (uncooked grain) and hence came to be known as Dhanka.[16]

Now they live in villages and their occupation is agriculture and labour.

Grasias : They are a scheduled tribe in Bombay and Rajasthan. Grasia is a term applied to the Rajput and other land-holders in some parts of Gujarat and Saurashtra, because they hold lands given to them as *garas* by the chieftains for maintenance.

The Grasia villages are not villages in the usual sense of the term. They construct their houses in their fields, and a collection of such fields and huts numbering around 500 may occupy an area of about 5 square miles. They always carry arms with them and they are good agriculturists.[17]

The tribes in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan, generally speaking, are on a higher plane of development than the southern aboriginals. Instead of following hunting and food gathering, they practise shifting cultivation with the hoe and the axe as implements; sometimes they practise settled cultivation. Excepting in the centre and in the interior of the hills and plateaus, they have undergone the largest amount of acculturation from their Hindu neighbours and have borrowed their customs and practices liberally.

MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh has the largest number of tribal people compared with the other states of India. The important tribe in this region is the Gond with its various sub-divisions like Muria, Bhotra and Parja ; others are the Koya and Korku etc.

Madhya Pradesh has provided shelter to these primitive tribes from the most ancient times. References of encounters with these people occur in numerous passages in ancient Sanskrit literature, where their chief physical traits are graphically described. In the hills of Bastar, live the Murias, the Hill Marias of the Abujhmar hills and the Bison horn Marias of the Indravati Valley. On both sides of the Satpura range and around the Maikal hills are found tribes like the Korku, the Agaria, the Pardhan and the Baiga. The Balahis of Nimar district belong to an untouchable caste.

Gonds : The entire Gond population numbering over two million, are mostly to be found in Madhya Pradesh. The land of the Gonds is known as the Gondwana, an appellation given by the Mohammedan rulers of Northern India. This land of Gonds with vast stretches of primitive jungle and rugged, bare and inhospitable hill sides is sparsely populated.

The Gonds are dark-skinned, with straight coarse black hair; they have less growth of beard and moustaches. The most characteristic feature of the Gond is his heavy nose with its alae extended. Some of them have thick lips and fairly well proportioned bodies.[18]

The Gonds who live in forests among the hills, have their settlements generally located near-about charming spots with views of undulating hills, dense with forest. The Gond settlement seldom counts more than five or six huts in all, containing about a score of human beings. Even now they practise the shifting type of cultivation known as *dippa* or *penda.* They burn the forest and then sprinkle seeds on the ashes.

A typical Gond village in a plain is usually located on a raised piece of land. The houses are built on either side of the main street At a little distance on one side—on the east—is the burial ground. A distillery is an important feature of the village, though it is usually not visible. Gonds are very fond of liquor. The important men of the village are the headman (*mukaddam*), priest (*panda*) and the medicine-man (*baiga*).

A house generally faces north or east and in no case does it face south, because, they say, *Yama*, the god of death, lives in that direction. So great is the fear of *Yama* that no Gond sleeps with his feet pointing towards the south; only the corpses are buried in that position, with their feet towards the abode of that dreaded deity.

In Chhindwara District, there are large pits dug out for holding grain in gravel soil. Dug out troughs of *sal* wood are kept outside the house for water and food for domestic animals, such as pigs and cows. The village black-smith usually collects the iron ore and also manages to have a supply of the bark of *saja* tree. He first roasts the ore with the *saja* bark and then after this roasting, smelts it in a furnace with the help of *karra* wood charcoal. This type of iron smelting is more common with Maria black-smiths in Bastar than elsewhere.

Tattooing is very common among the Gonds. Women are more lavish in getting their face, forehead, arms and breasts elaborately tatooed.

The Gonds have a varied diet. From the forest, they get an unlimited supply of flowers, fruits, roots and leaves; they also catch big and small animals for food. The plain Gonds have taken to settled cultivation and so agricultural produce forms the main source of their subsistence. The Hill Gonds, on the other hand, even now practice shifting cultivation, and produce only light millet grains; they invariably supplement their meagre agricultural yield with animal flesh and the varied produce of the forest.

While previously they wore only scanty clothes, gradually the Gonds are learning to wear adequate clothes. The Hill Marias who are the most primitive section of the Gonds, are imitating the Murias, who have taken to waist-coats and shirts. On ceremonial occasions, while dancing, they wear quite clean clothes.

During the last few decades the Gonds have changed and are further changing in their material aspects and culture and are adopting some of the ways of their Hindu, Muslim and Christian neighbours.

Magic and rituals take different forms among Gonds in different phases of their social development. The hunting Gond would light the lamp or fire, read omens and enter the thick jungle, the *baiga* divining and indicating the direction of his expedition. The agriculturist Gond would, before sowing, make public offerings to the earth Mother, and when the rains fail-would harness nude girls to the plough.

Murias : They are a sub-division of the Gond. Among them the institution of *gotul* is interesting. Unmarried boys and girls visit the place; the boys are known as *cheliks* and the girls as *motiari.* Usually the normal activities of the *gotul* begin when *cheliks* and *motiaris* of the village gather together after they have finished their dinner in their own homes. The parents take no objection to their sons and daughters visiting the *gotul*; the institution has social sanction. Sometimes the attendance is made compulsory and those who do not attend have to pay a fine. Such institutions are met with among other tribal people as well, such as Hos, Mundas, Oraons etc.

Altogether, the *gotul* is an institution that has manifold uses. It teaches social habits to the youths of both the sexes. It trains them in post-marital behaviour and makes them useful members of

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society. It inculcates a feeling of tribal discipline, provides a focus for the sentiments of the people and prepares the younger generation to discharge those social and economic obligations without which collective life of any kind can neither grow nor exist.[19'20]

Marias : The Hill Marias are tall, handsome and graceful. Some possess a light brown complexion. The hair is plentiful on the face and scalp; the limbs are well proportioned.

Among the Hill Marias, there is a menstruation-hut, just outside the village where the women go for a week, during their monthly period; they come back to their own houses only after a purificatory bath. The door of this cottage opens to the other side of the village so that the occupants may go out to answer the call of nature, without being seen by any villager.[21] The institution of *gotul is* also present among the Murias of Kondagoan and Narainpur, Bastar.

If two or more persons die in a household in one year. the Maria family very often abandons it and makes a new one. When quitting the old house, they do not go out from the usual door or exit, they make a hole in the back wall to clear out. They do so in the belief that the evil spirit would not be able to detect them leaving and hence would not follow them. If the village is visited by an epidemic, the whole settlement is deserted. This custom of leaving the house or the whole settlement is also found among many other tribes.

The Bhatra, Parja and the Muria are sub-divisions of the Gond but have in due course adopted distinct names. The Praja are the tallest among them; their complexion varies from brown to dark, the face is slightly prognathous, the chin receding with no traces of epicanthic fold.

Baigas : Many of them live in the Mandala and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh. They seem to be related to Bhuiya or Bhumia of Bengal and Bihar.

A Baiga village, unlike those of the Gonds, is either in the form of a large square, or with houses lining the sides of a broad street. It is in the thick of the jungle at a spot specially selected for its beauty. The village has a clean and cheerful look, but the houses themselves are only tumbledown structures. The Baiga are fond of keeping pigs and the smell of pig's dung pervades the whole habitation. The Baiga have few possessions, hence changing the house-site or a village site due to some calamity or necessity is no problem for them. If the Baiga has money he buys food, liquor and a wife, in that order of preference. His religion consists of mobilizing the forces of the deities and gods to fight the evil spirits that bring him misfortune and disease. Hunting, fishing and trapping are his recreations. He practises shifting cultivation which is called *bewar.*[22]

Shifting cultivation widely practised among the tribal people goes by different names in different regions: Bhuiya of Orissa call it *dahi* or *koman*, Maria of Bastar call it *penda*, Assam hill tribes call it *jhum*.

UTTAR PRADESH

The Tharus are one of the important tribes in Uttar Pradesh; the others are Khasa, Kolta, Gujar, Nats etc.

Tharus : They live in the foot-hills of the Himalayas, in the region of Tarai. Their habitat is bounded on the north by the Kumaon district, on the south by the districts of Bareilly, Moradabad, Rampur and Pilibhit, on the west by Kashipur tehsil, and on the east by Nepal. Khatima and Sitarpur are the two tehsils of Nainital where Tharus are most concentrated; they also have their settlements in the districts of Gonda, Gorakhpur, Bahraich, Kheri and Pilibhit. Their total population in the above districts is over 22000.[23]

Tharu villages are generally located at a distance of two to three miles from one another. In a Tharu village, fields separate one house from another. A narrow and unmetalled lane runs through a village and on either side of it, the houses are arranged in a line on a higher level. Even a casual visitor to a Tharu village is impressed by the neat arrangement of the houses and their cleanliness, in contrast to the congestion of other villages in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

The Tharus have predominantly Mongoloid features. A Tharu male wears a piece of loin cloth 4 to 6 yards long by which he covers his body from waist downwards; a *phatuhi* covers his back and chest. A Tharu female wears a skirt (*ghanghariya*) tied round her waist. An *angiya* or *choli* covers her torso and *arghana* or *udhaniya* covers her head.

The main occupations of the Tharus are agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, hunting, collecting forest fruits and roots, labour, carpentry, smithy, pottery etc.

Nats : They are an ex-criminal tribe, found scattered all over Uttar Pradesh. They are also found in Madhya Pradesh, Bombay and Bengal. The majority of them call themselves Hindus, though there are Muslims among them too. Their main occupation is singing and dancing, acrobatics, conjuring and the sale of articles made from fibres, grass, straw and reed. They also dispense medicines for incurable diseases and for vitality. Crooke calls them "a tribe of so-called gypsy dancers, acrobats and prostitutes."[24]

PUNJAB

In the hills of the Punjab, live a picturesque tribe of Gaddis.

Gaddis: They live in small villages scattered along the banks of the Upper Ravi and the Budl Nadl rivers in Chamba state and along the foothills of the Dhaula Dhar range in the Palampur tehsil of the Kangra district of East Punjab. They wear a distinctive costume of handwoven woollen cloth stretching from their necks to their knees with a woollen rope around their waists. In their hands is usually a *hookah* or a pipe, and tucked in their woollen rope a purse covered with bright red beads, and a flint and pouch of tinder for making fire. They are fairly well off, and this is not due to their skill in agriculture but to the fact that a number of villagers in every village supplement their income by tending sheep and goats. Every shepherd on the mountain has a fixed home, which is often a very solid three-storeyed building made of stone and wood. During the winter, they care for their sheep in the Kangra Valley; in the spring they cross over the range of Bharmaur and to the Tibetan-speaking district of Lahul; in the autumn they climb upto the high 12,000 feet pastures on the intervening range, gradually being forced down to the Kangra plain again for the winter. During the winter, a large number of Gaddis who have no sheep, move from the central district either to stay with relatives on the Kangra side or else to look for odd jobs on the Punjab plains gladly taking whatever their Hindu co-religionists will give them in the way of food.[25]

As a race, the Gaddis are a simple, fierce, stalwart and virtuous people. Sturdily built, very often bow-legged, they are accustomed to enduring great hardships. They are frank, peaceful and jovial in their manners. They are deeply religious and worship the Hindu gods, their presiding deity being Siva.

Sikligars: They are the Rajputs of Rajasthan whose ancestors fled from their homelands after the fall of Chittor and settled in the Punjab. They took up the profession of making weapons of war, after their exodus. The patronage of the Sikh *gurus* and their followers, attracted them to Punjab, where most of them embraced Sikhism. Many of the Sikligar families now live in colonies in and around Delhi.[26]

ANDAMAN, NICOBAR ISLANDS

In addition to the tribes on the mainland, there are the tribes of Jarawa, Onge in the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal.

Onges : The Onges still live in a Stone Age culture. Ethnologically negritos, they are hunters and gatherers. They are not interested in agriculture even if the techniques and benefits are demonstrated to them. This is mainly because where they live, the food is plentiful, just waiting to be picked up or shot down. All the nooks and corners of the lagoons where crabs and shell-fish abound, are known to them, and game is plentiful.

The arrows used by the Onges for hunting game have a very long cord attached to them. This makes tracking simple, for a wounded animal drags the cord along, thus betraying its position. The arrow-head, which was formerly fashioned out of sharpened tridacna, a very hard wood, is now of iron. The cord is made from the fibres of hibiscus trees. Few of the fruits that the Onges eat are rich in sugar content, but this is amply compensated by the vast quantities of honey that they consume. Their method of collecting honey surprises any outsider observing them in action. They make no attempt at all to protect their bare bodies from the bees, nor do they, as is done in other parts of India, use smoke to drive the bees away. Meat and honey form a considerable part of Onge diet. By far the most important item is fish; fish are sometimes caught with nets by Onge women, but the real fishing is done by men with bows and arrows from canoes.[27]

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2

Some Features of Tribal Culture

TRIBAL PEOPLE IN India not exposed to new ideas and techniques which evolved among human civilizations over the centuries, continue living in an insular present. Nor have they changed their beliefs and customs.

When the four-footed apes came down to earth from the trees, some of them stood erect adopting a two-footed posture. The new posture and the new environments posed their own problems. The process of solving these problems involved planning, thinking, making and using tools, first of stones and then of metals. This process lasting over millenia, turned the apes into Homo-sapiens—thinking men.

The early Homo-sapiens observed that there were some natural phenomena which posed problems and dangers to him, and there were others which were useful to him. The former he counted among his foes and the latter among friends; gradually these turned into evil spirits and gods respectively. Famine, floods and fever were counted as evil spirits or the works of evil spirits; the sun, the rivers, air, water and fire, as gods or the works of gods. Early man evolved such lines of thinking and the tribal people living in a similar environment, continue thinking along these lines even now.

There are many other similar beliefs which the early man had and the tribal people have now. We will have a brief look at these beliefs of the tribal people.

EVIL SPIRITS

Dreams which take one to other places, experiences and times, provide the tribal man with the idea that he possesses a double, an ethereal image, a spirit, a soul, which goes out of him temporarily during dreams, and permanently after death. Seeing a dead man in dreams confirms his beliefs. He comes to think that as long as body and soul are together, the man is normal and in good health but he becomes sick when the soul leaves, or is abducted away from him; death occurs if the soul does not return.

After death this soul turns into a spirit. As it does not like to remain outside the body, it keeps hovering about finding a suitable abode here or there, amidst the cemeteries and burial places, trees, stones, crossings and occasionally, if offended, takes possession of a man and then does him harm, the severity of which depends upon the spirit's inherent nature. These spirits in India are variously called *bhuts, prets, churel, dyan, danoon* etc.

Spirits of dead relatives—ancestral spirits—do harm if they are not properly remembered and provided for, but if they are appeased they help the living relatives in avoiding dangers by giving them prior information of events to come.

It is not only the once living who turn into spirits, but also the non-living objects like hills, river, stones, trees etc. possess spirits which can do good or evil, help or obstruct human beings. So they too have to be appeased.

MAGIC

The helplessness of tribal man against the forces of nature and intervention and interference of gods and evil spirits in his day-to-day life, forces him to resort to magical rituals and propitiatory and sacrificial measures. If the rains are not forthcoming, if there is not enough game in the forest, if the crops fail, if pests abound, if disease and death prevail, such rites and practices provide him assurance and security. He makes use of them in the important events of routine life such as conception, childbirth, initiation, marriage, different agricultural operations, construction of a hut, preliminary to a difficult and hazardous journey or hunting big game. The following two examples are illustrative.

In Mandla, those who take part in fishing expeditions, assemble before sunrise on the bank of a river or stream at a spot selected by the village headman with the help of the divination of the *gunia.* Here they work till mid-day, when their womenfolk bring them the *pej* (gruel). While returning, the women construct a mound or platform before the house of the leading man of the party. All the fish caught on the day are brought and poured on the raised platform and the leader of the fishing party distributes the catch among the members of the team, leaving one share on the spot, under cover. Next morning, this share left on the platform is taken away and placed on the grave of the leader's ancestor.

If the catch does not come upto their expectation, the women are asked not to bring food on the day following, while the men continue to fish all the day long without any sustenance. They continue on an empty stomach so that the powers that be, will take pity on them and provide them with an ample catch.

If even this labour and sacrifice goes unrewarded, they level the raised platform to the ground and the next morning go to another village and dance the *sela* dance before the tombs of the ancestors of that village. The headman of the village gives the party food and drink, the expenses being shared by the villagers, as such an entertainment is a link in the chain of reciprocity, co-operation and mutuality of obligations between two or more villages. Liquor is the popular item in the menu. Armed with the good-will and blessings of the ancestral spirits of the neighbouring village, they return to their own village and bow to their own ancestors near the mound they earlier levelled down in disgust.

Next morning they again go out fishing with greater confidence. If they are unsuccessful, they level down the platform once again and exhibit their dissatisfaction with the ancestral spirits of the other village, by singing discourteous songs and calling them names. On the other hand, if they succeed, they praise the ancestors, offer sacrifices to them, and dance a gala dance in grateful appreciation.[1]

Similar rituals are undertaken when a Gond goes to a hunting expedition. He lights a lamp (*dia*) or if there is no oil, he kindles a fire, reads omens and then goes out into the jungle. If he gets some, he offers a chicken to the *bageswar*, the presiding deity of the forest. When he goes out hunting, the Gond usually does not carry food with him, the idea being that the forest god will take pity on a hungry man and reward his efforts with success. In group hunting, the *baiga* (village priest) is first asked to divine the direction of their approach and the favourite haunt of the horned game. Furthermore, the *gunia* offers some sacrifice to Thakurdeo, the presiding deity of the village. This is meant to immunize the hunting party against the attacks of ferocious animals and at the same time ensure a heavy bag.[2]

Different agricultural operations need the performance of rituals to produce a bumper crop and protect it against damage. After the sowing, the Gonds get *bhilawa* tree leaves and plant them in their fields and worship *Bahisasur*, the deity believed to preside over the paddy fields. An offering of a little *ghee* and *gur* is made and burnt in fire; this sacrifice is meant for increasing the fertility of the field. A chicken is sacrificed and some grains dipped in its blood are cast into the fields with the prayer that the plants may flourish unhampered by weeds.[3]

These illustrative examples are indicative of how much the life of a tribal man is entangled in rituals of magic and sacrifice. He is limited by restrictions of other sorts as well—restrictions created by himself which he believes, through his experience under his peculiar environmental conditions, to be of help to him. These restrictions are the different taboos observed widely among all tribal communities.

TABOOS

Indulgence in certain acts may have proved harmful and dangerous to a tribal community at one time or another. Even if such an act is forbidden, there is a likelihood that the rule may be broken again; but if a religious basis is attached to it, people may not dare to break it then. Thus were taboos born. It is strongly believed by the tribal people that even the accidental breaking of a taboo brings misfortune to the person, generally in the form of disease or death.

An Oraon cultivator of the Ranchi district in Bihar does not allow a woman to touch a plough. If it does happen somehow, the whole village is thrown into consternation and they all atone for it. The villagers sacrifice fowls, pigs and pigeons before the sacred village grove so that the misfortune may be stayed. In a similar situation, the Kharias yoke the woman to the plough, make her drag it over the field, eat a little grass, and finally go round the village begging alms, the proceeds to be used for a tribal feast. The Todas of the Nilgiri hills worship their herd of buffaloes; the dairy is sacred to them and women are not allowed to enter it or cook food of which milk forms a part. Among the Tharus of Nainital, Tarai and Pilibhit, the women occupy a dominant position, while the men are subservient; so much so that men are denied better offices and occupations. Should a man violate such restrictions, mistortune is believed to fall on the entire society. The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh do not touch a woman in her menstrual period, for that is enough to destroy all prospects of a reasonable harvest. The Gonds, therefore, segregate such women in specially improvised huts, called 'green-houses' or menstruation-huts, situated outside the village, so that even the wind in contact with the hut may not blow towards the village.[4]

The Kharias of the Ranchi district do not allow any member of their community who returns from jail or from some distant place to enter his own house or that of his neighbour, or touch his wife and children until he has undergone ceremonial purification by licking a drop of blood of a sacrificed white cock placed on a leaf. The Munda-speaking tribes on similar occasions offer rice-beer to the Supreme Being, the Sing Bonga; a drop of it is believed to purify the person concerned. A Kharia woman married outside the village, cannot enter the cattleshed of her parents' house or of the house of any other Kharia except her husband's. A similar taboo exists among the Hos of Kolhan which limits the movements of the women to kitchens. Such taboos protect the cattle from infections which the outsiders may carry from other villages to their own; purification ceremonies involve washing and cleaning oneself as well.[5] Rituals and taboos about different agricultural operations are also given due attention. When the Gonds begin harvesting, the head of the family plucks an ear of the corn and says "whatever god is the guardian of this place, please receive thy share and do not trouble us." The last plant in the field is sometimes sent home through a little girl and is kept at the bottom of the grain-bin. Again, before winnowing, a pig and a chicken are offered to *Chitkaur Devi*, the goddess of the threshing floor. Their blood is sprinkled on the winnowing fans and baskets. The storing commences after a befitting sacrifice is made to the god with a suitable and appropriate magic formula to avoid grain being damaged by fire or other causes.

Taboos against sexual intercourse on certain occasions are prevalent all over the world. When the crops are ripening, it is a taboo for the Gonds to have sexual intercourse or even to sleep in the village. Men live in the fields and look after the crops day and night till it is harvested. Taboos against having intercourse with a menstruating or pregnant woman or one in childbed is extremely widespread.

TOTEMS

Another widespread practice among the tribal people is that of observing certain totems. Through prolonged observation and experience, tribal communities came to realize that in their peculiar environment certain things, objects or animals, needed protection against misuse or killing. Say, a tribal group is spread over a restricted, snake-infested territory; the place abounds in peacocks, as these birds kill snakes; the peacock is then named a totem animal to avoid its being killed; this meant that if a peacock is killed then the wrath of the gods is visited on the whole community.

The totem animal when it dies is ceremonially mourned and buried as a member of the clan. The skins of the animals which are the totems of a clan, are donned by the totemic group on specified solemn occasions. Many totemic groups paint their persons with the picture of the totemic animal, and take the picture as their coat of arms, and even tatoo it on their bodies. The totem animal, if dangerous, is propitiated and it is believed that it will spare the members of the totemic clan. If the totem plant or animal is edible, the members may eat them on ceremonial occasions after offering their excuses to the animal. The clan recognizes a mystic tie with the animal species and believes that the animal will foretell the future and protect and warn the members of the tribe.

In time, the tribes or their clans came to be known by their totems. The Santhals have more than 100 clans all named after plants, animals and material objects. The Hos have more than 50 such clans, the Mundas 64, and the Bhils 24. Many castes in Orissa such as the Kurmi, the Kumhar, the Bhumia, are named after the serpent, the pumpkin, the jackal and other totems. The Dhelki Kharias of Nagpur plateau are divided into eight totemic clans *viz.* Soren (rock or stone), Muru (tortoise), Samad (deer), Barliha (a variety of fruit), Gharhad (bird), Hansda (the eel), Mail (dirt), and Topna (bird).

Many totems are parts of animals—the liver, the heart, the entrails, or the juice of a flower or fruit, or the kernel of a fruit. Such partition of the totem animal or plant may have been necessitated by a multiplication of the original groups, as the same totemic group split up into more than one totemic clan to meet the growing needs of its social life. In Chota Nagpur, for example, when a totemic clan becomes numerically very large, it splits into subtotems and the latter content themselves by adopting as their totem, parts of the animal or plant which designated the larger division out of which they have regrouped themselves.

SUPERSTITIONS

Tribal people are extremely superstitious. Living in a hostile environment of unseen spirits, the tribal man looks for signs which might be helpful to him in his day-to-day life. That which once was associated with his misfortune he avoids, and that which was associated with his good luck at other times, he readily undertakes, creating in the process superstitions, omens etc. He interprets all happenings, minor and major, so as not to come in the path of danger.

A Munda does not like to see a miser or a money-lender when he rises from bed early in the morning as it is sure to bring him ill-luck. Meeting a one-eyed person is not a good omen. If a Kharia encounters an empty pitcher, a fox, a *dhaman* snake, women on the way to wash clothes or a falling twig, it means he is headed for disappointment and frustration in his work or journey and he may as well abandon it. It is usual among the Hos for women of the family not to wash the clothes on the day someone in the family decides to set out on a journey. Sneezing or calling out from behind are bad omens and people do not move out or if they do, they must either return to the place of starting or sit down for some time before commencing the journey again The crowing of a cock after sunset or before midnight tells of coming misfortune and to avert the consequences, the house-holder must kill it and offer it as a sacrifice to the village spirit.[6]

Death from infectious diseases such as smallpox, cholera, etc. is seldom followed by cremation, and the path through which the corpse is carried is strewn with thorns and grains charged with magical formulas so that the departed soul may not come back as an evil spirit, and harm those it has left behind. The sacred groves or *jahira* of the Mundas are places marked by old trees or stumps —remnants of the original forest where villages have now been built; and no one dare cut a tree or a branch without incurring the displeasure of the presiding spirit, a female deity with 'matted white hair' moving on a crutch.[7]

If a Baiga sneezes once or thrice at the beginning of a journey, he goes back home; if he sneezes twice, he knows all will be well. If he strikes his foot against a stone, he returns home. If a man meets a snake crossing the road in either direction, he returns home and sends for a *gunia* who tells him which god it was; he sacrifices a chicken and sets out again. But some Baiga believe that so long as the deer crosses the road from left to right, there is no danger. It is very bad for a bear to cross the road in front of you, or if you hear a *kiddari* pigeon as you are starting out. If jackal 'cuts the roads', you must prepare a *thua* on the spot which is to put the branch of any bush on the path, and a big stone above it. The branch represents the enemy who sent the jackal, the stone is his grave; you may then go on your way.

If your left eye twitches, it may mean many things: that the stranger is coming to the village; that you are going to the meet a bear or tiger in the jungle; that some disaster is threatening the house of your mother-in-law. The twitching of the right eye gives greater hope: it means that the sick will recover, or that a friend or a relation is coming to meet you.

If the palm of your hand itches, it is a sign that a hare has been caught in a trap away in the jungle. If your right hand itches, it means somebody is going to give you money. If the sole of your foot itches, it means somebody is talking about you; if it tickles unbearably, then somebody must be abusing you. If you want to find out who it is, begin to recite slowly the names of everyone you know. If the itching ceases, as you utter any name, then you know that it was that person who was discussing you. It is possible to discover when a visitor will come: take a *pipal* leaf and cut it so that it exactly fits the mouth of a small water-pot; fill this with water, close it with the leaf, and turn it upside down. Begin to say "To-day so-and-so will come. Tomorrow...Thursday...Friday..., and the water will break the leaf and gush out as you mention the day on which your visitor will come. It is very bad to see a crow bathing in a stream. It means that some relation who lives far away has died and no message has yet had time to reach you. So also if your right arm throbs; it means that some relation is in trouble.[8]

Among the Lepchas of Sikkim, if one dreams of gathering sand, collecting wood, seeing a woman with a big goitre, it means a good harvest; to put on new clothes or gather firewood or to have stones thrown at, means an acquisition of property. Solid excreta indicate a good buckwheat harvest; liquid excreta indicates that the harvest will be destroyed by storms. To be covered with filth, indicates coming wealth. To dream of climbing or going up hill is propitious. If one dreams of being cut or being given silver, it means that the next day, one will be given a present of *chi*.

The following types of dreams are considered very unlucky by the Lepchas. A sick person lying down indicates a bad harvest. A tooth coming out means a relation will die ; if it is from the right side of a mouth, a paternal relation will die; if it is from the left, a maternal one. Hair coming out or even combing hair foretells death. A neighbour pounding rice foretells a death in his house. To dream of drinking foretells rain. Dreaming of a lake, swimming or falling into water, all foretell illnesses. A river foretells a message from the state authorities; agreeable if the water is clear, disagreeable if muddy. To dream that one is excreting in public means that one's relations are casting slanders. Being naked in a crowd foretells illness, as do dirty or ugly people. The setting sun foretells the death of kings. To dream of death foretells illness; to dream of a landslide, death. To dream of a red cloth or red flower means one will cut one-self; to dream of chicken's droppings means that some one is going to poison the person.

The tribal man believes in the wrath of the gods, the evil intentions of different spirits and the superhuman power of magic; he believes in his taboos, totems and superstitions. These beliefs shape his thoughts, ideas and practices in all his daily activities.

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3

Causation of Disease

Only a few diseases are ascribed to natural causes by the tribal people ; syphilis and gonorrhoea are two among them. The Baigas believe that syphilis lives in a woman's vagina and one gets it by going to her. But it might also be caused by eating hot things and by drinking too much *mahua* liquor. One gets gonorrhoea by drinking hot water and going out in the sun. When a man goes out every day in the sun, he gets fever and this turns into gonorrhoea. Another way of getting gonorrhoea is by stepping over a place where somebody has urinated. One may also get it by going to a woman in her menses.[1] Other diseases ascribed to natural causes by many tribal people are headache, diarrhoea, cough and consumption. In all these diseases physical factors such as water or weather, heat or cold, excessive indulgence in sex or liquor, are considered as playing the causative role.

Except for a few diseases, all the rest are believed to be caused by supernatural agencies. If somebody falls sick seriously and suddenly, or when a disease takes a sudden bad turn, or when it involves a derangement of the mental faculties, the tribal man assigns it to a supernatural cause. This supernatural may be any one of the following :

1. Wrath of goddesses.
2. Evil Spirits :
    1. Non-human : (*a*) Spirits of sickness, (*b*) Demons
    2. Human : (*a*) Ancestral spirits, (*b*) *Bhut* and *Churel*

3. Sorcery : (1) Imitative, (2) Contagious, (3) Disease-object Intrusion, (4) Soul Loss
4. Witchcraft
5. Evil Eye
6. Breach of Taboo

These supernatural causes, individually or in a group, cause ill-health, disease and death among human beings. We will take up each one of these causes and see what particular diseases they are believed to cause, and how they operate.

WRATH OF GODDESSES

When goddesses are not given due recognition and reverence, they get angry and in their wrath cause disease and death among men. For the wrath of a goddess to be the cause of an illness, the most widely held example is the causation of small-pox by Sitala-Mata or Devi, one of the seven sisters, who is said to produce various pustular diseases.

Sitala is worshipped among many of the tribal communities so that she may not let loose small-pox, a disfiguring and deadly disease. Among the Sikligars of Punjab, Sitala worship takes place on the seventh of the light-half of the month of *Sawan*. This is called *Sitala-saptami*. The shrine of Sitala-Devi is mostly a small construction, two feet high, before which the offerings are placed. The offerings are considered impure and nobody eats or takes them, because it is believed that the disease is transmitted to the person who takes them from the shrine. As Sitala is believed to ride on a donkey, some of the Sikligars feed donkeys with gram ; others let loose white cocks and pigs as sacrificial offers. An adult person who has once been attacked by small-pox and has recovered from it, does not perform these ceremonies. Sitala is worshipped when there is no small-pox in the community ; if the disease has broken out, no worship is offered.[2]

The Tharus firmly believe in Mata Bhawani, a collective name for seven sister goddesses, which send diseases and epidemics. Each one of these goddesses causes some particular sickness and different offerings or sacrifices are made to each one separately :

1. Sitala causes small-pox ; to her are offered cloves, betel-nuts, coconuts and *hom* (fire sacrifices).
2. Durga causes cholera ; to her are offered a red flag and an iron tripod alongwith *hom.* In some villages, the sacrifice of a goat is also considered necessary for her appeasement.
3. Jwala causes fever ; to her is offered *hom* only.
4. Kalaka causes ague ; to her is offered *hom* only.
5. Hulaka causes vomitting of blood ; to her is offered *hom* only.
6. Purwa causes insanity ; to her is offered *hom* only.
7. Parwati causes severe headache ; to her is offered *hom* only.[3]

Among Lodhas of Bengal, Sitala is worshipped with awe and fear as the controlling deity of small-pox. According to them, Sitala has got six sisters. They are named after six epidemic diseases in the following order :

1. Kada Basanta—a type of small-pox.
2. Lata Goria—a fatal type of small-pox turning the body black.
3. Baincha or chicken-pox which resembles *bainch* fruit (Flacourtia sepiaria).
4. Chalta phulia—a type of fatal pox resembling chalata fruit (Dillenia indica), in which the patient becomes swollen and dies soon.
5. Milmita or measles.
6. Olautha or Asiatic tropical cholera.

The Lodhas believe that Sitala transmutes herself into human form during an epidemic. She is said to have been seen by several people. At dead of the night, one female patient was said to have been touched by her three times from head to foot, and she collected all the scales over the pustules in her bag. When the patient got up, she saw that all the pock-marks of the disease had disappeared. She is said to be about 32 years of age and can traverse any distance within a moment. Clad in a white sari with red border, she keeps a basket in her hand. Once she was seen to come to her temple riding on an elephant.[4]

Among Saoras, the small-pox goddess is known by different names in different parts of the Saora territory. Some people believe that small-pox is caused by the menstruation of the goddess; it is when she is in her period that she rages through the villages bringing death to the people. They do not worship the goddess but drag her out of the village. During an epidemic, a small cart is made by the medicine-man; it is loaded with bundles of wood and dragged out of the village to the shrine of Lurnisum.[5]

Among Malers, when small-pox hits a village, the people worship Charka Gossaiyan after the epidemic comes to an end. The villagers make a wooden frame to represent the Charka Gossaiyan. It consists of two wooden poles 20 feet high and one foot wide joined together by another horizontal pole. This Charka Gossaiyan is appeased by sacrificing a cow and pouring the sacrificial blood at the foot of the two pillars.[6]

Syntengs, in the Jaintia hills in Assam, consider it a great honour to be touched by small-pox goddess. They call the pock marks, 'the kiss of the goddess'; and deeper the marks, greater is considered to be the honour. Women wash their hair in the water used by a diseased person and also bring their children to his house so that they may be touched by the small-pox goddess and get the kiss of the goddess. The house of the sick is considered sacred for the time being, and the visitors have to wash their feet with clean water before they enter the house. In the Brahamputra Valley, the small-pox goddess is generally known as Ai, 'the mother' and its attack is described *Ai olowa* or *Aisakal olowa*, 'the appearance of the mother.' The seven sisters, including Sitala, are considered to control the diseases in which rash or pustules of various types appear over the skin, and these seven sisters are worshipped according to the occasion.[7]

Another goddess called Mari Mata is believed by the Balahis of Madhya Pradesh to cause cholera. The only way of escaping from this disease is to propitiate the Great Mother. If she accepts the offering, the patient infected by the disease will recover. The application of natural remedies against the disease is actually discouraged by the Balahis in the conviction that a disease caused by supernatural powers cannot be cured by natural means. The very attempt to do so will only increase the wrath of the goddess.[8]

Yet another goddess called Mata Masani, akin to Sitala, is said to cause emaciation among Sikligar children in Punjab. Propitiation of the goddess is the only remedy in the disease.

The Baigas of Madhya Pradesh believe many of the diseases prevalent among them to be caused by twenty-one sisters born of Murra Deo and Piri Deshahi. The twenty-one sister-goddesses cause the following diseases and need to be propitiated as follows :

Chilkin Piri causes abdominal colic ; she must be given a black pig, three chickens, coconut and incense.

Bai Hardahin causes a yellow vomit ; she may be satisfied with a pig.

Dispiri Mata gives syphilis ; she must be given the ears of a buffalo.

Mirgi Devi causes epilepsy ; she must be given the tongue of a horse as a sacrifice.

Naikin Bai attacks the bullocks of the Lamana ; she must be given a black goat.

Hadphoram Marhi causes small-pox ; she must be given a *sarria* (rosary), black bangles, a *bandan* such as is tied round the head, and a *tikli*.

Kairadeshahi causes children to be stilll-born ; she must be given a speckled she-goat on which must be put *tikli*, *sarria*, *bandan* and black bangles and the goat must be allowed to go free in the jungle.

Durpatta Mata obstructs delivery and thus kills both child and mother.

Maura Mata gives children fits; she must be given a black chicken and coconuts.

Ghatchindan catches cattle by the throat; she must be offered a black chicken and coconuts.

Baihi and Bauri Bai drive men mad. The man cannot speak, he bites his hands and feet. She demands a spotted goat and a black she-goat.

Kapni Piri gives ague; she must be given a coconut.

Chingan Mata cripples a man's hands and feet with rheumatism; she must be given chickens of five different colours, a young pig, coconuts and liquor.

Dhahu Dhukan causes sudden pains in the chest; she must be offered a black chicken and coconuts.

Raksin Mata causes itch with large sores; she wants chickens of seven different colours and a coconut.

Galadevi causes mumps; she must be given a black she-goat.

Churelin Mata goes to young men in their sleep and robs them of their manhood; she must be given a chicken with a black bangle and red *sarria* round its neck; or parched rice should be sprinkled round the bed at night so that when she comes, she eats it and forgets to go to the boy.

Rahabasin Mata startles people and makes them ill with fear; she must be offered a black chicken.

Pharka Undharan Mata opens the doors, comes into the house and makes all the vessels rattle. Tie two little gourds over the doors so that when she comes, she will play with these and not come in.

Phoki Mata attacks the cattle with dysentery; she must be offered a goat and a pig.

Jappi Mata is the sleeping disease; she demands *ghi* and a little *gur*.[9]

The goddesses that bring diseases, death and destruction among human beings, are portrayed among all tribal communities as very touchy, liable to get into a rage soon, and are appeased only when appropriate offerings and sacrifices are made with due reverence and recognition. The same goddesses when properly worshipped bestow children on barren women.

EVIL SPIRITS

From the cradle to the grave, tribal man feels surrounded by evil spirits of various kinds. He is afraid of them because they cause disease, death and destruction. He offers sacrifices to them so as to propitiate and appease them. Fear, not devotion, is the basis of his worship. Sometimes he addresses these evil spirits by what their nature is, *i.e.*, evil spirits; at other times he addresses them as gods. But all he intends is that he be left alone and not interfered with. If by sacrificial offers he cannot avoid them, he takes the help of magic; often, he requests the tribal medicine-man to help him in getting rid of the evil spirit that is pestering him. The medicine-man uses various means to drive away the evil spirit.

The evil spirits are of various types. They may be divided into two broad categories: (1) those that originated from non-human sources, and (2) those that had their origin in human beings. The tribal people themselves make no such distinction; it is made to help us in our description; this distinction, being arbitrary, cannot be exact.

NON-HUMAN SPIRITS

Among these also, there are two main types. One which might be called properly spirits of sickness or disease; these spirits are associated with particular diseases and when particular sacrificial offerings are made, they depart. The other type of non-human spirits are the demons that possess a man and do him damage. We will first take up the spirits of sickness.

Spirits of Sickness: Interesting myths prevail among the Saoras about the origin of some of these spirits. One day Kittung, the god, went to bathe and rubbed some dirt off his body and put it on a stone. Kannisum was born from it and burnt like fire.

Kittung was frightened and put his head down and sat still. Kannisum said to Kittung : 'I have been born from your body ; tell me what to do and where to live'. Kittung said : 'Go to Kindabul village and find the chief's eldest son. Go into his head and make him fall down. When he is out of his senses, make him throw his hands and feet about as if he were a fowl. When this happens they will call the medicine-man and he will see that you get food. Then you can leave the boy alone. This was how Kannisum, which causes epilepsy among human beings, was born.

Another Saora myth states that when Mardisum, the god or spirit that now causes cholera, was born, he had nothing to eat and drink and so went to Kittung and complained. Kittung said: 'Go to Barlung village for there are many Saoras there. Make them purge and vomit. When they begin to die, the medicine-man will call for you. That will be your chance ; then you ask for anything you want.' Mardisum went immediately to Barlung, and caused cholera and killed twelve of them. Mardisum asked for goats and fowls. Since then Mardisum has never been without food.

The Saoras call the disease by the name of the god or spirit that causes it. While in some cases, a god is associated with a particular disease, as Kannisum is associated with epilepsy and Gajjisum with itch, in other cases the same god can cause several diseases. Uyangsum, for example, may give fever, leprosy or headache. Even accidents, according to Saoras, are not as accidental as they seem to be; if a man cuts himself with his axe while chopping down a tree, he may have insulted a god living in the branches ; if he injures himself while cutting up fire-wood, he may have annoyed a god who had chosen that bundle of sticks to rest on. The most common accident is falling off a tree. Half-drunken men climb up the tall palm trees and when some one slips down and dies, his death is explained as a push by Uyungsum.[10]

Belief in evil spirits causing diseases among human beings is very wide-spread. The Santhals believe in the existence of a large number of *bongas* which cause different diseases; so do Mundas, Oraons and Kharias of Chota Nagpur. Among Malers of Santhal

Pargana, these spirits go by the name of Gossaiyan.[11] Among Mikirs, recurring sickness and troubles are ascribed to Theng-thon or Okl-angno; he is propitiated with a goat and a pig or two or three fowls A man gasping in sickness is believed to be strangled by Theng-thon. If in spite of invoking the gods, the sickness grows worse, a sacrifice is offered to Theng-thon without summoning the divines or Sang-kelang-abang. The Lakhers believe that sickness is caused by the Leurahripas, the spirits that cause disease.

The Chakmas of Chittagong believe that there are demons of cholera, fever, small-pox etc. They propitiate them in a river bed, or in the thick jungle where the spirits love to dwell, with offerings of goats, fowls, ducks, pigeons and flowers.[12]

Among the Sherpas of Nepal, the most persistent in their attacks on men and women are the malignant spirits known as *shrindi.* Their number is legion, and people have always to be on guard to ward off their attacks, and wage an eternal battle in which man can never comfortably relax, but in which he relies on the efficacy of well-established ritual, and the aid of two kinds of experts, the lamas and the lhawa.[13]

Among the Grasias of Bombay, the usual supernatural causes of disease is the annoyance or displeasure of some *veers* or evil spirits who possess the person and trouble him continuously unless they are propitiated. There are many *veers*; five of them are described here.

Dudhio *veer*, said to be a spirit without a head, generally gives trouble to children. The child falls sick, his eyes get closed, but when a coconut and jaggery are offered, it generally leaves the child, who again gets well.

Ragatio *veer* is said to cause bleeding from the mouth, the rectum and the uro-genital tract. The person gets very sick. Coconut, jaggery and *sukhdi* (a sweet) are offered as propitiation.

Sulio *veer* is said to cause shooting pains in the back and sides. The person becomes very uncomfortable. This *veer* is also propitiated like Ragatio *veer*.

Masanio *veer* causes high fever to the person who becomes very weak. The *veer* is propitiated by offering coconut, *sukhdi,* jaggery and sometimes a hen.

Meladio *veer* causes serious sickness to the person. The special *bhopa* of Meladi alone can tackle it. It has to be offered a goat.[14]

Demons : Evil spirits of non-human origin which might collectively be called demons go by various names in different parts of the country. Among the Sansis of Punjab, *kabbis*, *danoon*, *rakash* and *matia* are very much dreaded. The characteristic features of each of them are as follows : *kabbis* is thought to be a very dangerous demon. It has a very dreadful appearance, having long nails and long feet. The nails are used to make deep cuts in the body of the victim and if the victim resists, it pierces the body of the prey with its long teeth and drains out the blood. A *kabbis* is extremely fond of sucking human blood. *Danoon* is the spirit of a giant or a monster. It is the most powerful of all the spirits. It is colossal in size. A *danoon* lives in tall trees in mountains, in caves and in jungle thickets. It attacks its victims at night, catches them by throat and sometimes strangles them to death.

Rakash is also a dangerous demon, fond of sucking the blood of human beings. It can assume any form. A *rakash* generally attacks women with children. It can enter a house in the form of a cat, dog or ram etc. The female type of *rakash* is called *rakashni.* Sometimes, she assumes the form of a very beautiful woman, seduces men and then kills them and sucks their blood. They attack at night.

Matia is also a very powerful and dangerous demon. It is found in whirl-winds. It can carry away the roofs of houses, thatches and men, cause strong gales and can break, uproot and wrench trees. It is found mostly in summer when there are many whirl-winds. Some Sansis, especially women and children, are observed saying to a whirl-wind "*Hai bhagi bharia, karman wallia, khair karin, parahan parahan laughin*". ('O spirit of great destiny and grace, do us no harm and pass away from us'.) The people believe that when a whirl wind is disturbed by throwing a brick-bat or an old and worn out shoe at it, the demon attacks with great ferocity.[15]

These non-human demons do not cause particular diseases in man but in a general way cause death and destruction, and the tribal people are really afraid of them.

HUMAN SPIRITS

These spirits are of two types *viz.* (1) ancestral spirits and (2) *bhut*, *churel* etc.

Ancestral spirits : These are the ghosts of dead relations. To most primitive peoples, the world of the dead is a very real one. The spirits of the ancestors are never far away; they take an active part in one's life, bring good luck and bad; one sees them and talks to them in dreams. People are afraid of the dead. When the soul leaves the body, it is not yet reconciled to its fate and may wish to come back to life by entering into some other body, usually of a relative, thus causing illness. This fear is reflected even today in burial customs that tend to make it difficult for the dead to return and recognize his relatives. The opening of the house through which the corpse was taken out is sealed shut; the traces of the funeral procession are erased and the mourners make themselves unrecognizable by all wearing clothes of the same colour ; a colour they usually do not wear.[16]

The period between a Saora's death and the performance of his *guar*, a sacrificial ceremony, is often one of much ill-health for the survivors. The spirit plagues them with night-mares and fevers; it fills the house with ill-omened cries and tapping; it makes the wine tasteless and the gruel stink. But every Saora tries to postpone the trouble and expense of the feasts as long as he can ; he ignores the warning dream, he puts off the importunate spirit with little gifts of rice and wine; and only when someone falls really ill, does he get busy with his duty to the dead.

When an old man dies among the Saoras, it is believed he goes in the Under World. There he feels lonely and helpless. There is nobody to cook for him or to look after his needs. Hence he makes his wife or daughter ill, so as to call her with him and to get looked after properly. When the medicine-man finds such a situation in a particular case of illness, he tries to persuade the spirit of the old man to accept a gift and to leave the patient alone.

Sometimes the ghost of a husband makes his living wife sick. This is either to have her with him in the Under World, or he is jealous of the fact that she has started loving somebody else[17].

The spirits of the departed, according to Nicobarese, live in the marshy, flat and malarious land in the centre of the Car Nicobar, and no person who is not a witch-doctor dares to enter it. These spirits often come back to their old haunts, but they are easily scared by noises or a bright light. They often lie hiding by the wayside, under the shade of boughs and leaves and pounce upon a man, and that man is soon laid low by sickness.

The second type of evil spirits of human origin are those who after death assume an evil nature due to the circumstances connected with their death or the evil deeds that they performed when they lived as human beings. *Bhut* and *Churel* are the dreaded spirits among them.

Bhuts emanate from those that die in an unusual way by violence, accident, suicide or sentence of law ; or those who have been robbers, notorious evil-doers, or dreaded for cruelty and violence. The death of any notorious character is a source of terror to all the neighbourhood, as he is sure to become a *bhut*, a demon as powerful and malignant as he was in life. They are represented with small thick bodies, of a red colour, with pigtails round their heads, horrible faces, the teeth of a lion in their mouths, and their bodies covered with ornaments. In the South, they are believed to live on large trees, empty houses, or old wells; they often appear in the form of a deer, a tall figure, a strange ox or goat. If a person sleeps under a haunted tree, cuts a branch of it, defiles the abode of a *bhut* or jostles one on the road, he falls sick or some ill-luck befalls him. In Gujarat, the *bhut* and *pret*, like the European vampire are believed to take possession of a corpse, and speak through its mouth; they appear in the form which they possessed when living, enter a living man and cause him to speak as they please and afflict him with some disease. They may appear as animals, and frighten people by vanishing in a flame of fire; sometimes remain invisible, and speak only in whispers; a *bhut* has been known to come to fisticuffs with a man, or to carry him off and set him down in a strange place. As a rule, they are helpless during the day, and move abroad in the night.[18]

Churel is the spirit of a woman who has died during pregnancy or during the agony and anguish of child-birth. The spirit of a *churel* is thought to be the most appalling of all the bad spirits. She has a very grisly appearance and if one looks at her feet, they are turned backwards. Her front is very beautiful and bewitching but her back is very ugly, black and putrid. Some of the tribes rip open the womb of a pregnant woman and take out the foetus so that the dead mother may not become a *churel*. Some tribes bury the dead mother and the foetus on the opposite sides of a stream as they believe the spirits cannot cross water.[19]

A *churel* may change her appearance as she pleases. To young women and mothers, she appears as an old, ugly woman with sagging breasts, protruding teeth and matted hair. In this attire, she brings disease and death to any woman who has the misfortune to meet her. In the dead of the night, the *churel* haunts the backyards of the houses and frightens the girls and women. To men she appears as an attractive young woman, beckoning and enticing those who fall in her trap; she takes their virile strength from them and makes them waste away. Only a powerful magician can help against her spell.[20]

The Hos of Chota-Nagpur believe that women dying in child-birth transform themselves into malignant spirits. Delay in delivery as also other complications in pregnancy are attributed to these spirits. Such spirits are believed to sit on the breast of pregnant women and thereby displace the placenta.

The Korwas believe that fever in women and children is caused by *churel*. She has no fixed abode; she takes her temporary abode on the branch of some tree on the outskirts of a village and when a woman or a child passes under that tree, she descends upon the victim and causes the disease. The victim suffers from spasms and delirium and in the course of the latter, he gives out the identity of the spirit and the manner of possession. The Korwas believe that the smoke of burnt chillies drives her away. Sometimes a forcible shake also dispossesses the affected person.

Bhuts and *churels* are generally believed to dwell in cremation grounds or grave-yards. They also live in desolate places, old, broken or dry trees. Some spirits live on the littoral sites of the river. Some people believe that spirits live in shattered houses and walls, and on the mounds of ancient habitations. The *churel* is believed to live mostly in the *neam* (Azadirecta) or tamarind tree and superstitious people believe that this tree should be particularly avoided at night.[23]

SORCERY

The tribal people fear the magic of the enemy as much as they fear the evil spirits. An enemy, be it a neighbour or a relative, through magic of his own or with the help of a sorcerer, can bring disease and destruction upon another. If the condition remains undiagnosed and untreated, it can lead to death.

In order to cause sickness, a sorcerer can apply any one of the following procedures or a combination of them :

(1) Imitative magic
(2) Contagious magic
(3) Disease-Object intrusion
(4) Soul-loss

Imitative magic : In this the sorcerer who wishes to bring sickness or injury on a person may draw a small image or construct a puppet which represents the victim. This image is then transfixed with arrows, buried or otherwise ill-treated, accompanied by suitable incantations; such measures are supposed to cause the person, against whom they are directed, to fall ill. It is due to this belief that the tribal people do not like to be photographed lest their photographs be ill-treated and they suffer in consequence.

Imitative magic is practised as follows among some of the Mysore tribes : The most common practice is of making a figure of the enemy in clay and transfixing it with an arrow which has been barbed with a thorn, or of moulding a figure of wax and melting it in a fire. Sometimes an earthen image is made and nails are struck into it. A figure representing the enemy to be destroyed is drawn on a small sheet of metal, gold by preference, on which some mystic diagrams are also inscribed. The sorcerer then declares that injury or death of the person shall take place at a certain time. After that he wraps up the little sheet in another sheet or leaf of metal (gold, if possible) and buries it in a place where the victim is expected to pass. Sometimes instead of a small sheet of metal, he buries a live frog or lizard enclosed in a coconut shell after sticking nails into its eyes and stomach. At the same moment as the animal dies, the person is believed to expire too.[23]

Among the Oraons, when a sorcerer wants to do some mischief, he makes an effigy of the victim and shoots an arrow at that effigy reciting some incantations. Within a few days, the victim is attacked with disease and if the medicine man (*mati*) fails to cure him, he expires. The same practice prevails among Santhals as well.

Whenever the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh want to injure an enemy, they make an image of him in clay preferably taken from underneath his footprint and carry it to the cemetery. Here they offer red lead, red thread, bangles and various kinds of grain and pulses to the ghost and utter thus : "The male and female deities, old and newely buried, maimed and lamed, spirits of the wind, I pronounce this charm with your help". Then they pierce the figure with arrows in the chest and cut it with a knife in the region of the liver. This is believed to cause the death of the victim. Another method is to draw the likeness of an enemy on cloth with lime or charcoal and bury it in a pot in front of his house on a Sunday or Tuesday night so that he may walk on it in the morning. This is also believed to cause the death of the person.[24]

Among the Balahis of Nimar in Madhya Pradesh, the medicine man (*barwa*) takes an earthen pot or forms one out of mud specially for the purpose of causing disease and death among one's enemies. He recites certain incantations over it. Then he paints the pot with vermilion and buries it at night near the enemy's house at a spot over which the latter is sure to step. As soon as this happens, the man gets sick and dies. Sometimes, the *barwa* takes a lemon or a piece of root instead of a pot.

Again, the *barwa* boils a handful of rice, pours sour milk over it and puts the mixture on a path frequented by the enemy. During the whole performance incantations and curses are recited against the enemy. If he steps on it he will soon get sick and die.[25]

Contagious magic : In this the sorcerer obtains something of the victim's body such as nail, hair, excrements, clothes, food or even the earth over which he has walked. He utters incantations over these objects and the person is at once attacked with disease.

Examples of contagious magic can be cited from among the Gonds and the Todas. Among the Gonds, one who wishes to transfer sickness to another person obtains a cloth belonging to the latter and draws two human figures on it, one of which is upside down, in lamp black. After saying charms over the cloth he puts it back surreptitiously in the owner's house. The owner gets sick immediately.[26] The Toda sorcerer collects some human hair, no matter whether they are of the person to be injured or not. Five small stones are then tied together by means of those hair, and then the hair and stones are tied in a piece of cloth. Then holding the bundle, he utters some incantations and carries the bundle to the village of the man upon whom he wishes these misfortunes to fall and hides them secretly in the thatch of the roof of the victim's hut. Misfortune, mishaps and diseases creep into the family.[27]

Object-Intrusion : The belief in the intrusion of an object by magic into the body of the victim so as to cause disease, is held widely among tribal communities in India.

The Oraon sorcerer sometimes carries with him a rag bundle containing what are known as *nasans* (destructive or harmful agencies). The *nasan* bundle contains human hair, nail-parings, claws, fragments of bones and legs of chickens and other birds and animals, as also small quantities of rice, grains, mustard seeds and certain other grains. A sorcerer desiring to harm a person manages to mix with such a person's food a fragment of a leg or bone or a hair rolled up or some nail-parings, from his *nasan* bundle, over which he pronounces appropriate spells. This bit of nail or bone or leg or hair is believed to grow by degrees inside the victim's stomach and finally kill him, unless some other magician is called in time to counteract the power of the *nasan*. In order to treat such a patient, the magician stands in front of the patient so that the sorcerer's mouth and navel respectively touch those of the patient; and in this posture he goes on reciting his spells until the bone, leg or nail-parings or other *nasan* comes out of the mouth of the patient into his mouth. In some cases the victim is made to lie down with head to the north and the magician sucks the *nasan* out of the man's navel. The *nasan* is thrown into the fire.

Similar beliefs prevail among the Santhals, the Mal-Paharias and the Saoras. The medicine-man brushes the patient's body with a pea-cock feather broom, uttering incantations all along and after about an hour or so declares that all is well.

Among Ao Nagas, the term used for medicine-man is 'extractor of dirt'. If a Sema Naga is ill or lame, he consults a *thumomi* who tells him that there is 'dirt' in his body. After rubbing the injured place he extracts either by mouth or hand, bits of stone, scraps of bones, teeth or chewed leaves, from the patient's body. In the case of a man with a cough, he takes out large masses of hair from his throat. Among the Tangkhuls of the Manipur Nagas, the medicine-man (*maiba*) kneels on the naked patient, pummels him, apparently bites him, and produces from a small bleeding wound in the side, a tiny stone about the size of a pea. This he says is the *lai* which had caused the sickness.[28]

Disease-objects may be intruded into the victim's body not only by the sorcerer but also by the evil-spirits and the witches. A Lhota Naga when sick usually attributes his illness to the malice of an evil spirit (*tsandhramo*) who has introduced some foreign matter such as hair or little stone into his body. In such a case, the medicine-man (*ratson*) has to be called in, who can see and extract any foreign body which may be the cause of trouble.

Soul-loss: Another method of causing disease and death by magic is to take away the soul or spirit of the victim from his body. Loss of soul as a cause of ill-health is a wide-spread belief. Nicobarese, different Naga communities and Santhals believe in this. The Nicobarese believe that the soul can leave the body and go away on its own travels. When this happens during sleep, the person gets dreams. Because of this belief they do not like to awaken a sleeper suddenly lest the spirit might be away at the time, and might get flurried by the interruption, and never get comfortably home again which may result in a very serious disease. They also believe that one's spirit might get left behind, or the soul might take temporary rest and shelter in some hole or crevice, or under the boughs of a tree and so get lost. The person might not know anything about it at the time, though before long he would sicken and die if the spirit could not be brought back.

Among the Saoras also, it is believed that fainting is due to Mannesum's removing a man's soul from his body and taking it on a visit to the Under World.[29]

Soul might leave the body under the influence of sorcery or be snatched away by the evil spirits.

The Lhota Naga usually regards himself as having two distinct souls called respectively *omon* and *mongyi*. The *omon*, which is visible in the form of a man's shadow, leaves the man sometimes before death in case of serious illness. It may just wander about, in which case it can often be induced by proper ceremonies to return, or it may go straight along the Road of the Dead, to the next world in which case the man dies. The *mongyi* leaves a man at the moment of death and goes straight to the world of the Dead, where it joins *omon* which has already gone on ahead except in the case of very sudden death. It is on the basis of such beliefs that the following incident is cited :

> "The Road of the Dead in our village runs past the Champo in which I used to sleep. One night when I was lying awake I heard some one stumbling past towards Wokha Hill, groaning as he went. Then I heard him say Oh, Oh, I cannot walk, and recognised the voice of my brother-in-law, who was very ill. I was frightened and shouted and woke all in the Champo. My

brother-in-law died the next day, for his soul *omom* had already gone on ahead."[30]

The Lushai Kukis of the Assam Hills also have a belief that soul-loss is one of the causes of sickness. Sometimes a Lushai returning from a shouting expedition feels ill. He then realises that he has lost one of his *thlaran* or souls in the jungle ; so he calls in the medicine-man (*puithian*) and requests him to call back the wanderer. The medicine-man then hangs the head of a hoe on the shaft of a spear and goes down to the water-spring chanting a charm and calling on the soul to return. As he goes on, the iron hoe-head jingles against the iron butt of the spear and the spirit hears the noise and listens. The *puithian* then returns still chanting and calling, and the soul follows him, but should the *puithian* laugh or look back, the soul becomes afraid and flies back to the jungle.

Garos of the Garo Hills believe that some cases of ill-health are due to the soul leaving the body and entering into another body. Sometimes the sufferer's soul cannot make up its mind where to stay and is therefore restless and uneasy. When this is the case, the person whose soul is afflicted becomes thin and emaciated, and if he dies, it is believed that the soul has entered the body of a child which is yet unborn ; should the afflicted person recover, some woman will bear a dead child.

A sickman of the Sema Naga goes to the fields to call the soul whose desertion of the body may be the cause of his illness. The sickman takes a chicken or a dog, kills it and sets aside a share for his *aghonu* (soul). He calls aloud his own name. He then returns very slowly home. His soul follows, but may easily be frightened away again. The frightened soul which had been following its body may fly back again and the unfortunate body, deprived of its soul, die a few days later.

Among the Ao Nagas, illness is commonly believed to be caused by the capture of the patient's soul by spirits *tsungrem*. These evil spirits lie in wait for men's souls, pounce on them, and devour them after holding them to ransom for a time. Its owner at once falls ill, and if his soul is not restored to him, he will die.

When a man has fallen ill on returning from a hunt or journey, the Lakhers of Assam think that Leurahripa (a spirit of the mountains, woods or streams) has detained the sick man's soul. It is thought that if a chicken is sacrificed then the sick man is cured as Leurahripa will seize the chicken and release the imprisoned soul.

The seat of the soul is believed by many tribal people to be located in the liver. That is why a sorcerer or a witch who intends to kill a person take away his liver (*kleja*). The Oraons of Chota Nagpur believe that there are among them some powerful sorcerers who by some appropriate spells, extract the liver of an intended victim without the latter knowing it. The liver thus extracted is carefully preserved and guarded by the sorcerer for twenty-four hours following the extraction. If within this period, the victim calls in the aid of another magician who through counter-spells succeeds in preventing the ants from touching the extracted liver, the liver will at the end of the twenty-four hours be restored to its owner and he will get well again. If, however, ants succeed in nibbling at the liver within this period, the patient will pine away and finally at the end of the twenty-four hours the sorcerer will eat up the remnant of the liver whereupon the patient will die.[31]

WITCHCRAFT

If a man is killed by a tiger or bitten by a snake, if a mother cannot be delivered of her child, if a boy's limbs wither and he goes lame, if the storm destroys the crops, if the milk curdles or the meat goes bad, the Baiga immediately looks round for a witch or sorcerer who might have reason to wish him harm.

A Baiga witch may injure her victim in many different ways : she may affect him directly and immediately by the power of her eye ; she may destroy him by a curse ; she may invoke the aid of the spirit with whom she has contacts to bring disease to his house ; she may send a snake to bite him, or a tiger to kill him ; she may herself come by night and drink his blood; she may send her magic flying through the air on a leaf, a pebble or a bat.[32]

The actual meaning of the word witchcraft appears to be the art or craft of the wise, as the word 'witch' is allied with 'wit', meaning, to know. But from about the 15th century, the word has been almost exclusively applied to a class of workers of magic.[33] The witches are generally female who first learn the art of witchcraft and then practice it among the people and cause sickness and death. There are different concepts in different Indian tribes about witches, the way they learn and practice their craft and the manner in which the disease caused by them can be diagnosed and treated.

Learning Witchcraft: Gond and Bhumia believe that witchcraft is learned either from persons who themselves practice witchcraft or it is learned in dreams. In most cases, it is the mother who herself a witch, instructs her daughter in the secrets of witchcraft and teaches her the powerful spells which give her power over some spirit. This spirit then serves the witch in her evil designs.[34]

The Santhals believe that the power of witchcraft is not inborn but always acquired by training. The witch loves her craft so much that she is ever anxious to teach it. So when a witch chances to meet such a suitable girl at a lonely place, she sings some songs. These are so captivating that the girl longs to learn them. But when the girl receives the lesson, some *bongas* (spirits) appear to her in a dream and ask her to worship them. If she refuses, they threaten her in various ways. Then the girl goes to the witch who taught her the song, and seeks her advice, and thereafter becomes a pupil (*chela*). She is then carried to the place of the *bongas* on a dark night and forced to be a real obedient pupil, when she is taught the spells and the witchcraft. This is generally done at night in solitary places. It is said that these spells, when learnt well, act like an unbalancing infusion and the learner loses her real self and becomes mad. A person in that condition is said to be in *rumu* in Mayurbhanj. The witch restores her to her senses again by the power of her spells. When the process is repeated for several days, the pupil gets used to the spell and learns witchcraft perfectly.

The period of training thus over, the witch now asks the pupil to practice her witchery upon any one of her nearest and dearest relatives. If she is unwilling to do so, she becomes mad (*kunki*) and dies. If she agrees, it is seen that as the result of her witchery, some one of her dear relatives falls ill and dies.[35]

Initiation into witchcraft among Bhils is done by the *badvi*, the woman who knows it. At the dead of night, in strict privacy, she goes to a bank of the river or a cemetery with the pupil. There she sprinkles water on the pupil's head, murmuring certain spells when the pupil becomes possessed ; she shakes, puts off her clothes and runs stark naked towards the water. The *badvi* digs seven small wells in the bed of the river and gives the pupil a bath. After this the pupil stops shaking and regains her own self. Then she has to sit on a single-threaded swing in a well and eat human excreta whereupon she becomes a full-fledged witch (*dakan*). If she gives up in the middle, she will die. She has also to sacrifice a near relation to the spirits of the witches.[36]

The Sherpas of Nepal believe that no woman is ever born as a witch (*pem*) but she may turn into a witch through envy, jealousy and evil thoughts and deeds. The mind (*sem*) of such a woman can act independently of her body, and is believed not to be fully under the control of her consciousness. Thus it is thought that the *sem* of a witch may visit other places and attack people, not only when she is asleep, but even while she is conscious and at work. While the woman developing such powers is aware of her nature as a *pem*, she is believed not to be conscious and in control of all the doings of her *sem*. Thus the condition of a witch may be regarded as an affliction comparable to the evil-eye rather than as a wilful manipulation of malignant forces. Yet, no good-natured woman kindly disposed towards her fellow villagers is in danger of turning into a *pem*. This process is always set in motion by a useful malicious act or persistent evil thoughts.[37]

Practising Witchcraft : It is commonly believed among Gond and Bhumia in Madhya Pradesh that in the dead of night when people are fast asleep, the witch undresses ; she does this to remain unrecognised. She goes to the hut (*maria*) where the *panda* keeps the image of his tutelary goddess the Marai Mata. There she promises the offering of human blood to the goddess. People believe that with the help of a spell, a witch can change herself into a cat, a rat or a worm, and in this disguise enter the house of an enemy unseen, and drink his blood. The victim does not feel any pain at the time, but in the morning when he wakes up, he may find himself covered with blood and may realize that he had been visited by a witch. He can only be saved if a medicine-man (*panda*) cures him by powerful spells and prevents the witch from visiting him again. But if no *panda* can be found to keep the witch at bay, the victim is repeatedly visited by the witch and drained of his blood. Eventually the victim dies.

There is a belief that the body of a person who dies as a victim of witchcraft does not perish even after cremation or burial. At night the witch goes to the cremation ground and removes the intact body from the heap of ashes, or if the victim has been buried she goes on the second or third day after burial to the burial ground, undresses there and walks naked three times around the grave of her victim. On her head, she carries either water, or oil, lamp black, vermilion or several dishes of food prepared specially for this purpose. A small light is also kept on the plate, and the witch herself carries a light in each hand. Then she places the plate with the various ingredients down on the ground and anoints herself with oil. Then taking care and making sure that nobody is looking, she acts as if she were digging the corpse and with powerful spells tries to revive it. As soon as the corpse is supposed to have come to life, she gives it something to eat and drink, and begins to ask it questions. Yet the witch has no power over the victim, till it gives no reply. But as soon as it utters a single word, or cries and groans when she beats and tortures it, the witch cuts off its head and drinks its blood and fills a pot with the blood for her goddess. With great care, she returns the corpse to the grave or funeral pyre, and proceeds to the shrine of Marai Mata. There she vomits the blood which she has drunk and pours the blood, which she brought along in the pot, over the image of the goddess. Then she dances in front of the goddess. She offers the blood of a young cock and a crab and her own blood which she takes from her little finger. She prays during the offering that the goddess may give her a chance to make another kill and to drink the blood of another victim.[38]

Among the .Hos, it is believed that a witch makes use of a variety of procedures to harm her victim. She also makes use of the methods employed ordinarily by the sorcerers. If she wishes to kill a person, the witch shoots an arrow at an effigy of the man or at his shadow. The man thus shot at does not die suddenly ; he develops consumption which is believed to cause holes in the lungs and lead to a slow but certain death. The arrow is generally shot at night without being detected, so that the victim may be taken unawares by the disease. Or else, the witch makes an effigy of the person she wishes to harm, with powdered rice or wheat flour, and then pricks it with thorns. The victim suffers similar pricks resulting in boils and ulcers all over the body. The third method that the witch resorts to is to obtain certain things which once formed a part of the person : nails, hair, spittle etc., or some articles which the person uses constantly such as a cloth, ornaments or a weapon etc. ; or things which are trodden upon by him, or even the dust of his feet. The effect on these things of the magical formula, with which the witch invokes the spirit under her control, varies according to the importance of these articles to the victim. The witch is known to take hair cuttings and pairing of nails of intended victims, and bury them in the courtyard for a week or so, and dig them out on the night of the new moon. She cleans the floor of the hut and then spreads the ashes in a circle on the floor. Then she kindles a fire with dried faggots inside the circle, and throws the hair or nail clipping into the flames. She swallows the smoke thrice and utters spells. When the fire is extinguished, she collects the ashes in a new earthen pot, and preserves it in a corner of the hut, or hangs it from the thatch of the roof. This she mixes with *illi,* or with fruits collected in the forest such as wild plums, *mahua, kuda* or black berry and the like. This dust, if taken by the victim whose hair or nail has been thus burnt, suffers ; but not others who may unsuspectingly drink or eat them. The first symptoms noticed are sneezing in succession for a considerable time. The next stage of the disease is high fever, dysentery or nausea, which come quite suddenly. Another method that a witch resorts to is entering people's houses in the form of a cat at night, licking the saliva trickling down the corners of the mouth of some sleeping person, or biting off a lock or two of hair, causing the unfortunate person to fall ill or his hair to fall off.

Among the Bhils the witches go by the name of *sikotri*. They are believed to be so common that in certain places it has reached the point where a household does not feel safe unless it also possesses a witch to compete with all the others. It is said that when the emissary from a Bhil girl's home goes to the house of her future husband in order to arrange for the marriage, one of the questions asked is : "Is there a 'watcher' in the house ?" Only if this is answered in the affirmative is the betrothal confirmed.

The Bhils believe that when a witch intends to kill a man, she makes an effigy of the man and takes it to the river, utters some spells and sprinkles some water over it. The man gets fever and dies in a day or so. Sometimes in the form of a cat, she goes to the victim's house, licks the sleeping man's feet and the victim goes on losing vitality and dies soon. She also casts an evil eye (*palva chhatwo*) after which the victim gets fever, his eyes become red and he loses his senses.[40]

BREACH OF TABOO

We have already discussed the beliefs of the tribal man in a variety of taboos which affect his daily life ; now we shall have a look at the taboos, breach of which is believed to cause sickness and death.

There is a taboo among the Birhors of Chota Nagpur not to sit on the hearth ; should they do so, they will be afflicted with sores. It is taboo among them to point a finger at the rainbow ; should they do so the offending finger will get maimed or curved. A man suffering from ophthalmia must not comb his hair ; if he does so the pain in the eye will increase. A Jaghi Birhor must not bathe in the rain water which has just fallen ; if he does so, he will get ophthalmia. A Birhor must not spit on the earth ; should he do so he will suffer from sores in the mouth. He must not burn the leaves, or the wood of the *soso* tree (Semicarpas anacardium) until the *jomnawa* (ceremonial eating of the new crop) has been celebrated ; should he do so, he will suffer from sores on his body.

The Baigas, accustomed to shifting cultivation, held plough-cultivation a taboo; even if one Baiga in a village used a plough, it was believed to bring evil upon all. To ride on a horse or even to wear shoes was tabooed by the Baigas. 'A Baiga once rode a horse. Immediately a tiger came and ate him in front of his own house ; two or three days later, it ate the horse also'.[41]

The Lakhers of Assam have a taboo against throwing hair into a salt lick ; if anybody does so, the evil spirit will seize the owner of the hair. If any one spits into a salt-lick, the spirit becomes angry and the spitter will suffer from tooth-ache or his tooth will fall out. A *jhum* (cultivated field) must not be cut above a salt-lick, as people, while in their fields, use the field for purposes of defecation and the filth is carried into the salt-lick by the rain. This naturally annoys the spirit and the owner of the field falls ill. It is taboo for a man to help a woman weave ; it is supposed to lead to consumption. It is taboo (*ana*) to leave certain articles such as gongs, money, baskets and paddy in other people's houses; as these articles are held to cause disease, the owner of the house in which they are left will go blind or suffer from a sore throat or toothache or rheumatism. If a person spits into a stagnant pool (*atlong*), sores will appear on his face, and if he defecates near one, sores will appear on his private parts. It is a taboo to strike a man with a woman's skirt ; if a man is struck with a skirt he will become consumptive. If a pregnant mother stumbles or jabbs her foot against a stone, the Ao Nagas believe that she will give birth to an ailing and sickly child. The Naga tribes of Manipur believe that mysterious sicknesses, the sudden appearance of boils, blindness, loss of speech and premature greyness follow if their taboo *(genna)* are ignored.

Belief in taboo is widespread and in certain tribal communities this belief is held very strongly. The following incidents cited by Haimendorf illustrate how deep this belief penetrates among the Nagas.[42] He writes :

> It was in the first month of my stay in Wakching that I told the *gaonbura* of my wish to purchase a small long drum. They advised me to talk to Chinkak, the Ang of Wakching.... Chinkak was... only too pleased to raise some extra cash by carving me a long drum. Yet he had his doubts about the task ; to carve a drum, otherwise made and dragged into the village with numerous ceremonies, was not so harmless as it appeared, for just then his wife was pregnant, and he feared that the child might be harmed if he carved that drum. I considered this only a pretext for raising the price, and my willingness to pay a larger and a comparatively high price for the drum eventually conquered Chinkak's doubts.
>
> He carved the drum, and I paid the price. A few months later, his child was born with a hare lip. "Of course," said the Wakching people, 'the slit in the drum and the slit in the child's lip are one and the same; Chinkak should not have carved that drum while his wife was pregnant."
>
> The two grave-figures, dressed and armed like real warriors with small spears and *dao*, are like so many of the other carvings of my collection, the work of my friend Mauwang, the Ang of Longkhai. He, too, had hesitated for a long time before promising to carve them.
>
> "When an Ang dies, we carve grave figures", he argued. "If I now carve such figures for you, might it not happen that some one will die ?"
>
> But at last I persuaded him, and so he sacrificed a pig before starting, as though he were working for a real funeral. Hardly were the figures completed, then Mauwang fell ill, and though he sacrificed my chickens he did not recover. Returning from Pangsha, I found him emaciated and worn out by recurrent attacks of malaria. Atebrin soon put him on his feet again, but instead of reproaching me for exposing him to the danger of illness by asking for the two figures, he thanked me again and again for the miraculous cure.
>
> These two experiences should have put me wise, and warned me against persuading a man to carve objects linked with magical dangers. But my collection lacked a model of coffin, and Chinkak, once more in need of money for opium, offered to carve me one. Ang's coffins are laid out on platforms like those of ordinary men but they are carved at both ends with hornbill heads. Soon after Chinkak had brought me the finished coffin, and received his reward, his five year old daughter fell ill, and died within a few days. Now it was necessary to make a child's coffin similar to the model Chinkak had carved for me, and there was not a soul in Wakching who doubted the fateful connection between the making of the model coffin and the child's sudden death.

All taboos are believed to be in the name, and under the sanction, of a fetish spirit, ghost, or deity and it is he who punishes the violator.

The violator of a taboo may not know what he has done ; it may have been, as is the case generally, unitentional, but unless the true nature of the sickness caused through a breach of taboo is discovered, the person cannot get well. The medicine-man when called, questions the patient thoroughly in this regard, and when no clue is available, he resorts to divination. Once the cause is discovered, a confession, a sacrifice and propitiation of the offended spirit is all that is needed to bring about a cure.

EVIL EYE

It is believed almost all over the world, more so among the tribal people in India, that some individuals have the faculty to cast a spell on others by just looking at them. Some do it involuntarily at whosoever comes in their path, others do it voluntarily because they are jealous of others and desire to possess what others have. These individuals are known to be either very ugly or very beautiful and as they cast the evil eye, the person or thing faces misfortune. The thing may perish, the person may get ill or more often have an accident. Children are believed to be particularly susceptible to the effect of the evil eye. The Balahis of Madhya Pradesh as well as many other tribes, do not like it if one admires their children's beauty or strength, for they suspect that such expressions of admiration are prompted by envy or jealousy. A barren woman especially is not allowed to look at a baby, because her gaze will be full of desire and envy.

The Lakhers believe that when an envious person (*ahmaw*) looks at someone possessing things that he would like to own himself, he sends his spirits into the body of the person whose property he envies, and at once causes a violent stomach-ache, which on occasions is believed to result in death. A strong and athletic man when attacked with *ahmaw*, gets weak, unable to go out hunting and finds it a labour to climb hills that would have been nothing to him before, his hair begins to fall out and other signs of premature old age descend upon him. An *ahmaw*, in fact, is a sort of vampire, which on seeing anyone prosperous and happy, tries to get hold of the property of the person he envies, by entering his body and making him ill, in the hope that the sick man will then make offerings to him.

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4

Diagnosis

JUST AS IT is important for a patient to know the cause of fever—whether it is due to typhoid, tuberculosis or malaria—similarly for the tribal people it is important to know whether a particular disease in a patient is due to the wrath of a goddess, the work of an evil spirit, sorcery, witchcraft, or the breach of a taboo Once this has been found out, to obtain a cure is a matter of rituals, sacrifices and incantations.

In this regard the medicine practised by the tribal people is completely rational inasmuch as it tries to bring about a cure by removing the basic cause of the disease ; it is a different matter that their concept of basic causes is different from that of ours.

For making such a diagnosis, there are different diagnostic procedures available in each tribe which, though they differ in detail, have some basic similarities.

Just as we begin with a 'History of the Present Illness' so does the medicine-man, by interrogation. He interrogates the patient in order to find out whether he has by intention or otherwise broken a taboo, has been disrespectful to the tribal gods, has not cared about and provided for the ancestral spirits, or if he has noticed any strange object in his surroundings, or has had a quarrel recently with a neighbour, wife, father or son, or he otherwise suspects somebody who could have intended him harm or illness. He asks the patient about his dreams; he interrogates other members of the family to find out what they think about the probable cause of the illness; he looks for omens. All this he does to find out the cause. This is done by almost all medicine-men among all tribes.

But if in spite of all this, he finds no clue, or if he has a clue and wants to confirm it, then the medicine-man takes the help of his 'laboratory procedures' which in his case are the different methods of divination. The commonest material used as apparatus is the winnowing fan ; others being rice, leaves of different trees, oil lamp, reeds etc.

The Saoras believe that there can be no disease without a spirit being its cause. And as there is a different spirit for each disease, it is important to diagnose which spirit is causing the disease so that appropriate remedial rituals can be undertaken. There are different methods available for this purpose. The medicine-man requests individually, by name, the different spirits to reveal themselves and also indicate their demands. He requests his tutelary in the other world to find out the truth and reveal it to him, which she does either directly to him, or the offended ghost or god comes upon the medicine-man when he is in a trance, and speaks through his mouth. Sometimes these inquiries are made with the help of a winnowing fan half full of rice which the medicine-man rubs round and round rhythmically so that it brings on a trance over him, a state in which he communicates with the inhabitants of the other world.

If all this is of no avail, the Saora medicine-man resorts to various tests, the most popular of which is the *bel* leaf (Aegle marmelos) test. The medicine-man lights a lamp and places it in a winnowing fan half filled with rice. He takes *bel* leaves one by one, and in each puts an unbroken grain of rice. He holds the leaf in the flame of the lamp and recites names. The answer is given by the grain of rice turning black and sticking to the leaf or by the way the leaf curves in the heat. The medicine-man proceeds by gradually narrowing the field of possibility. He begins, for example, by taking the names of gods, ancestors and sorcerers. If a sorcerer is indicated, he takes the names of all possible villages. When the village is found, he takes the names of the individuals. A similar test is conducted with the help of a ceremonial knife which the medicine-man passes through a flame, judging the answers by the way the blade gets blackened. In order to know which part of the patient's body has been attacked, he takes a lamp and passes it over him. When the flame burns up brightly or if the skin shines unnaturally, it indicates the affected part.

Among the Santhals, after the preliminary enquiries, the medicine-man (*ojha*) looks at the face of the patient and asks him to put out his tongue in order to examine it. Then he sits down beside the patient and feels the pulse at his wrist. A good Santhal *ojha* is said to be able to distinguish as many as 23 different types of pulse in each of the arms. Interpretation of the pulse tells him the cause of the disease. If the pulse comes towards the thumb or the index finger, it is a sign that *bongas,* the Orak *bonga* (that is, the house bonga) or some other *bongas* are at work. If the pulse comes towards the middle finger, the Abge *bonga* (a kind of tutelary, but rather uncertain and feared bonga) is 'hungry' ; if towards the ring or little finger, a spirit of the field or of the village outskirts is at work. The pulse is further supposed to reveal whether the complaint is due to 'sudden fright', inflammation, or poison, and so on.[2] On the basis of his diagnosis, the *ojha* treats the patient with incantations, *jhar* (cleansing) etc.

If this does not prove effective, the *ojha* restarts with the diagnosis and this time resorts to divination. He takes some *sal* (Shorea robusta) leaves and a little mustard oil and water to perform what is called *sunum bonga* or *khari.* He sits down on his haunches and jerks his head a couple of times to the right side and then dips his right hand index finger in the oil, and sprinkles a few drops about, more specially in the direction of the sun and then puts an oil mark on the earth (dharti mae). He now takes two *sal*-leaves, looks at them intently and puts oil marks on one of them, saying at the same time what each oil-mark stands for, the supposed possible cause of the patient's disease : natural causes, human beings, *bongas* and the ancestral spirits. Then he begins to rub each mark with his finger, uttering incantations; then he blows on the leaf. He places the second leaf on top of this and presses the two together, bows to them, and then again utters another incantation and then leaves them aside. After a while, he takes up the pair of leaves, bows, removes the covering leaf and then proceeds to examine what different shapes the different oil-marks have taken. These shapes indicate the cause. His statement of the result, clearly worded, is something like this : 'Such and such a *bonga* (mentioning a tribal or family *bonga*) comes out on the oil leaf. Somehow he has been offended or hurt. Please satisfy him and make him friendly again. Libate water to him (this is done, coupled with a promise of a sacrifice on recovery). Do something yourself ; do not trust in the *ojha* alone. However, there are also signs that some spirit of the outskirts is at work. I myself shall take care of him. You look after your own. And if you have any doubt, please seek corroboration elsewhere. It will sometimes happen, that the divination points in a wrong direction. It is satisfactory to get corroboration from elsewhere ; then all doubt vanishes.'

Another procedure a Santhal *ojha* employs is as follows : He draws three long lines and several short ones across the long ones on the ground with a twig or the handle end of a *sirom* broom. This done, he fixes the twig in the ground inside one of the squares, then he raises it to his forehead, as if he were saluting it and then destroys the figure. He repeats this operation a couple of times, every time destroying the figure drawn. When saluting the twig, he names a disease ; if the hand trembles, it is the disease that the patient is suffering from. After the disease has been named, he tries to find out the *bonga* involved. He takes a broom of *sirom* (Andropogon muricatus) and with the handle end of it draws a circle on the ground. He puts the handle end of the broom down in the centre, then takes the broom up to his forehead, names a *bonga* and then puts the handle end down again in the middle of the circle and keeps the broom there in a vertical position for a few moments. He repeats the process several times until the hand holding the broom commences to tremble involuntarily. At this moment he knows that it is the *bonga* just named that is up to mischief.

Among the Malers, whenever a person falls ill, the medicine-man (*guru*) performs *telpatta* to know the cause of a disease. He takes a leaf of *sal* or *bansh* (bamboo) or *sarifa* and puts a few drops of mustard oil on it. He moves his index finger on it and utters some incantations and names a particular *gossaiyan*. Then he closely searches the leaf for a black spot. If he finds out such a black spot he identifies the death or disease caused by that particular *gossaiyan*. This process of diagnosing the cause of the disease and death called *telpatta* is the traditional and most popular devise with the Malers.[3]

Among the Hos, if the medicine-man (*deonwa*) finds any difficulty in coming to a diagnosis, he resorts to *dukidamal,* examination of the urine. A small quantity of *dukida* or urine is brought in a leaf-cup early in the morning by the patient or any of his relations. The *deonwa* puts a drop of mustard oil on it and studies the reaction carefully. It is from the nature of this reaction that he makes the diagnosis whether the disease is caused by *najom* (a sort of poison administered by a sorcerer or witch) or *tiji* (foreign particles) and then treats it accordingly.

If the *deonwa* fails, he resorts to divination which may be done by any one of the following methods :

Some member of the family takes a handful of rice, touches it with the body of the patient and at the same time names all the spirits known to him. He then brings that rice to the *deonwa* who puts it in a winnowing fan (*sup*) and names all the spirits in succession, and at the same time notices any displacement of rice when a spirit is being named. This provides him a clue to the particular spirit causing the disease. This method is called *bonga nam*[4].

The second method is known as *danda nam*. In it, questions are put to Sing *bonga*, but instead of the grains, two men with sticks (*sotas*) in their hands sit on either side of the *deonwa*, and when the formulae are being recited and names of the spirits called out one after another, the men are suddenly possessed and begin to shake their sticks, indicating thereby the cause of the disease. Now, a number of people armed with sticks follow the *deonwa* into the forest, the latter continuously reciting incantations. The party visits different parts of the forest, and if they come to the abode of the spirit responsible for the disease, their sticks grow heavy, and they feel the presence of the *bonga*. The *bonga* has to be propitiated, if the patient wishes to be cured.

The third method is called *rum num*. In it the *deonwa* recites his incantations, and a man sits at his feet. The effect of the incantation is to make the man shake his head and be possessed, and in course of the possession, he reveals the name of the spirit who has caused the malady.

In the fourth method, a few grains of *arua* rice are taken in a *sal* leaf, and the *deonwa* touches the body of the diseased person with the leaf. He then mutters his weird incantations over the grains, and when the name of the *bonga* causing the disease is called out, the patient feels a heaviness over his body, which makes the identity of the *bonga* clear.

In the fifth method of divination, two leaf-cups of oil are taken to the *deonwa* after they have been touched by the patient. The *deonwa* looks into the oil and discovers some signs from which he ascertains which spirit has caused the disease.

If after the cause of the disease has been found out by the *deonwa* and the relevant sacrifices performed, the patient shows no signs of improvement, further divination is resorted to. Days and nights are spent in this, and in the meanwhile medicines are given, incantations are uttered to exorcize the spirit. The *deonwa* touches the head of the patient with his two hands and gradually draws them down from head to face, from face to the neck, from neck to the shoulders, to the elbows, to wrists, down to the palms of the hand, and thence down the nails into the earth. This process is repeated twice or thrice, the direction varying every time but always finishing in the earth where the spirit is buried. In case all methods of treatment fail (and there are many cases where they do fail), the *deonwa* warns the survivors by saying that the wrath of the spirit has not yet been appeased and that it may involve other members of the family. Sacrifices are made even after the death of the patient, to protect the survivors from further attention from the spirits, and as the spirit of the deceased is conceived as hostile to the family, precautions are taken by the bereaved family against the mischief of this spirit as well.

As the spirit which caused a death and threatens the survivors still remains unnamed, divination continues even after death. The ashes of the cremated body are scrutinized for the impression made on it. If the impression on the ashes resembles a long line made by dragging a rope, it is believed that death has been caused by the agency of the spirits of dead ancestors. If the traces resemble the foot-prints of a lizard or squirrel, it is believed that Buru *bonga* has killed the man. Marks resembling the footprints of a crab indicate death at the hands of the Bagia *bonga*. If it is death from the agency of the mischievous witches, the impressions appear like those of a cat's paw. If only holes are found on the ashes, the person must have died from the holes in his lungs, *i.e.*, from consumption. When the mark indicates a thumb impression of a human being, death is believed to be caused by Jugini *bonga*.[5]

Among Gond and Bhumia, there are several methods of divination available but the most common one are: (1) Winnowing fan and gourd, (2) *Urda* grains wrapped in a green leaf and (3) Measuring reeds of *chirra* grass.

In the method of winnowing fan and the gourd, the medicine man (*gunia*) takes a handful of *kodai* grains, waves them with a circular motion over the head of the patient and pours them into a winnowing fan (*supa*). Then he burns incense (*hum*) and prays that his divination may be successful. While he rubs the palm of his hand over the winnowing fan covered with *kodai* grains, another man, his assistant (*chela*) who sits facing him and holds a hollow gourd (*lauki*) containing a few grains of *kodai* and rice in his hands, looks with attention at the medicine-man. The latter, after addressing his gods and reciting certain invocations, starts asking questions in order to discover which god or spirit has caused the sickness or sent the misfortune. Then he tries to find out how the offended spirit can be appeased or supplicated for help. As soon as the medicine-man mentions the name of the god or spirit responsible for the patient's sickness, the gourd in the hand of the medicine-man's assistant receives a jerk and a rattling sound is heard.[6] This method of diagnosis is also used by the Baiga. They call it *supa-tuma*.[7]

Instead of *kodai* on a winnowing fan, the medicine-man also uses *urda* grains in a leaf cup. The procedure is similar.

Sometimes a winnowing fan and an earthen lamp (*diya*) is used. The medicine-man holds in his left hand the winnowing fan upside down. With his right index finger dipped first in sweet oil, he draws two diagonal lines over the winnowing fan beginning with the left top corner. Then he makes obeisance with folded hands. After that he places a small *diya* filled with oil and a burning cotton wick in it, near the open rim of the winnowing fan. Holding the lamp with his left hand, he begins swinging it slowly to and fro. He commences by asking questions, imploring the gods to tell him the truth and to reveal the cause of the malady or misfortune. As long as the flame of the lamp flutters in the breeze or through the motion of the medicine-man, there is no answer to his questions. But when the flame suddenly burns straight and bright, the medicine-man first assumes that the spirit or ghost has answered his question in the affirmative. In this manner, the medicine-man finds out the name of the evil spirit responsible for the sickness or accident, then the manner in which the spirit can be appeased and the offerings it expects. A more or less similar method called *banbati* is used by the Baiga in which a small earthen lamp is placed in a network of string which is swung to and fro. When a question coincides with the swing of it towards the medicine-man (*dewar*), the answer is considered to be in the affirmative and vice versa.[8]

In another method, the medicine-man makes a small pile of *kodai* on the floor. On the pile, he places a vessel (*lota*) full of water. On the *lota* he places a wooden stool (*pirhwa*), on which his assistant (*chela*) sits. To put him into the right mood, the assistant turns round and round the stool rotating easily on the *lota*. The medicine-man now takes some rice grains and throws it on his assistant and begins his questioning. He inquires which god was responsible for the disease and quickly recites the names of a number of gods. The man on the stool receives a jerk and starts trembling when the god responsible for the complaint is mentioned. The same happens when the kind of offering which the god demands for appeasement is mentioned. This method is also used by the Baiga. They call it *pidha-gumana.*

In the *chirra* grass method, the medicine-man picks some reeds from a broom and after beating the thicker ends gently on the ground, he measures a length of twelve fingers breadth of them and cuts them there. After reciting certain incantations he asks a question, for instance, which spirit or god had caused the trouble. This question is answered again by measuring the reeds. If they now appear somewhat longer than before, the answer is taken to be in the affirmative ; if the reeds now seem shorter than at the first measuring, a negative answer is assumed. This method is also used by the Baiga. They call it *bahari-kari.*[9]

Another important type of divination among Baigas is when the god speaks directly through the mouth of the *barwa.* A *barwa* gets into a trance and throws his limbs and head about. At such moments he reveals secrets not ordinarily discovered by other methods. This method of divination called *dham* is practised as a regular procedure.

Among the Balahis of Nimar district in Madhya Pradesh, when a person gets ill, a relative, intending to consult the medicine-man (*barwa*), takes *joari* gram and a coin in his right fist and passes them along the body of the patient from head to foot and then takes that to the *barwa.* The latter takes a bath, spreads a clean sheet on the floor and places the image of his *deo* or *mata* on it and in front of it puts a *bajut*, a low stool and sits on it. The relative of the patient opens his hands and pours the *joari* grains and the *paisa* on the floor within the barwa's reach. Now the *barwa* begins to pray and invoke his *deo.* He burns camphor and often hemp (*ganja*) over a fire. Holding his hands over the fire and inhaling the smoke he works himself into a trance, swaying gently to and fro. Three times he passes his hands over his body from head to foot. Incessantly he recites incantations till the *deo* takes possession of him. His whole body begins to shake and tremble ; he begins to perspire profusely. He sings and rolls his eyes and writhes in convulsions, supported by his attendants. A man paints *kuku* on the forehead of the *barwa* and everybody present shouts *Jai*. This is an utterance of welcome to the *deo* who has taken possession of the *barwa*. The relative of the patient addressing *deo baba*, asks him the disease that the patient suffers from. The *barwa* takes some *joari* grams and throws them in a glass of water and looks for the figures formed on the surface of the water by the floating grains and then announces the cause and the necessary sacrifices or offerings for the spirit or god causing the disease.

If the patient shows no improvement, another medicine-man called *janka* is consulted. The *janka* enters the house and touches the feet of the patient with joined hands. This greeting is not meant for the patient, but for the *deo* or *mata* who by his (or her) presence in him is causing the disease, Then the *janka* feels the pulse of the patient with his left hand while with his right he pulls the fingers of the patient's hand. Each time he mumbles the name of the *mata* or *deo*. The joints of the patient's fingers crack while he is pulling them, and by the number of crackings, the *janka* is supposed to find out which *deo* or *mata* has caused the sickness, and what offering is demanded for the cure of the patient. The usual demand is for eggs, chickens, or a goat, combined always with a number of coconuts and other things.[12]

If a disease is suspected to have been caused by witchcraft, among Gond and Bhumia, all the suspected women touch a red hot iron bar after dipping hands in a pot containing melted *ghee* (clarified butter). The women have to grip the red hot iron with both hands and let them slide down the full length of the crow bar. The woman whose hands do not get burnt, is certified a witch.

Among the Baigas, the *gunia* heats the oil on the fire, then he puts a coin into the boiling oil. All the women must come and pull out the pice one by one. If their fingers are burnt, they are innocent; she who feels nothing is the witch.[11]

It is indeed remarkable how often the patients benefit from this divination. Some get instantly well after a competent medicine-man has diagnosed their case and advised the right offerings. There are, of course, many cases when a diviner fails to effect a cure.

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5

Treatment

THE TREATMENT OF a disease depends upon what is held to be the cause of that disease. If an educated man believes that the cause of malaria is the malarial parasite which reaches the blood stream through the bite of an infected mosquito, then to get a cure he takes quinine or an allied drug, and to prevent further attacks he tries to keep himself away from the mosquitoes. In a similar fashion, if a tribal man believes the cause of a disease to be the wrath of a god, influence of an evil spirit, sorcery or breach of a taboo, then to treat that disease he takes such measures as are appropriate for its cure ; to prevent further attacks he wears a defensive amulet or takes such other precautions as may be necessary. For him, this is the most rational way of treatment.

In the description that follows, different approaches of the tribal people as regards treatment of different diseases are described, but we have to keep in mind that in actual practice all these procedures are mixed up—magical charms with the prayers and herbals—and sometimes it is difficult to separate one from the other, even for the sake of description.

PROPITIATION OF GODS AND GODDESSES

Propitiation of gods and goddesses that may have caused illnesses through their wrath because of disrespect or disregard to them, takes different shapes with different tribal people. It includes religious prayer, incantations, offering animal sacrifices, and on rare occasions, human sacrifices as well.

Among the Yanadís, when somebody is ill, they resort to *sode*, a form of religious prayer. The Yanadis don't believe in evil spirits and they offer their prayer to their deity, usually Lord Venkateswara of the seven hills, to forgive the patient's faults and short-comings and to restore him to normal health.

Sode, also called *rangam* is a peculiar form of prayer. There are practitioners of this profession of healing art and they are generally male; females only play a helping hand. The *sode*-sayer, crossed-legged, with dishevelled hair, back and head erect, holding a sounding drum, sits in his hut which has a fire lit in it. The patient or his relation sits inside or outside the hut listening to the chanting of the *sode* prayer. The *sode*-sayer repeats a chant again and again in a shrill prolonged note in a non-stop fashion. Often his wife picks up a note and goes on saying it. The *sode*-sayer sometimes gets possessed and then answers questions put to him about the nature of the disease, remedial measures and the time it will take to effect a cure. It generally starts after sunset and goes on for five or six hours or even upto early morning next day.

Though not a pleasant thing to hear for the modern ear, the *sode* ceremony is conducted very seriously and serenely. In the hut when *sode* is uttered, the entrance of children, of people outside the caste or of women in their menstruation periods is tabooed. The place is kept scrupulously clean and no eating is permitted. The hut is decorated with pictures and painted figures of gods and goddesses and family deities. The fee charged for saying *sode* is small, within reach of everybody and the results are remarkable enough for this method to have its continuous line of adherents.[1]

Irulas of the South, like the Yanadis, also indulge in this form of prayer. The male Irula beats the drum and when this reaches its climax, the patient or his relation breaks a coconut and burns camphor and incense so as to propitiate the gods. The Irula man goes on beating the drum, shakes his head about, his wife standing nearby sprinkles turmeric water over him, and soon he starts perspiring profusely, a sign that he has fallen in a trance and is possessed by the deity. Now his hair knot is untied and he shakes his head more violently and breathes very rapidly. A little later, he calms down and then becomes the mouth-piece of the goddess possessing him. Questions are put to him and he replies telling the patient how he should conduct himself.

Propitiation of the gods and goddesses who in their wrath cause illness among human beings, mostly in the form of different epidemics such as smallpox and cholera, takes different forms and shapes.

When cholera breaks out among the Balahis of Nimar, Madhya Pradesh, a *hela* (buffalo calf) is worshipped by the headman and then this is taken through the settlement (*basti*) and around it. The headman then sacrifices the animal in honour of Mata Marai, the goddess of cholera. Its head is buried on the boundary of the village to keep the sickness away ; the meat goes to the *kotwal*, who distributes it among his fellow Balahis and other low-caste people. The whole village observes a fast and no cooking is done or fire kindled till the whole ceremony is over.[2]

Among Gond and Bhumia, an epidemic of cholera is believed to be caused either by Mata Marai or some other enraged goddess. At the time of this epidemic, '*bida* ceremony', a farewell to the goddess is performed, which is conducted by the medicine-man (*gunia*). He first tries to find out whether the performance of the *bida* rite would be appropriate and acceptable to the goddess. This is important lest the goddess be enraged further and kill more people. When he has assured himself on this point, he sets about making preparations for the ceremony. He builds a toy-cart (*garhi*) consisting of pieces of planks standing on two round wooden slabs as wheels. The wheels are about four inches in diameter, and the cart is about a foot in length and breadth. The whole structure is painted with red ochre, lime and turmeric and decorated with reeds taken from a broken winnowing fan or a broom and with maize grains. This being ready, a goat of brown colour is purchased out of the money collected by public subscription, each villager contributing his share. A procession now starts with the medicine-man at its head and all the villagers following him. This procession proceeds to the out-skirts of the village. The medicine-man himself carries the diminutive cart, a piece of a broken earthen-ware pitcher whose bottom is decorated with criss-cross lines of white, red and yellow colour, and he drives the goat as well. At a spot where two roads intersect, somewhat outside the village, but still well within its boundaries, the toy-cart is put on the ground and the potsherd placed at its side. The villagers also deposit there their old baskets and winnowing fans. The idea is to send the goddess off in the cart and to give some parting gifts in the form of discarded baskets and winnowing fans The goat too forms part of such a gift ; it is not killed in sacrifice, but just driven out of the village and chased into the jungle ; this ceremonial chasing away of the goat is called *nikasi*. Sometimes, when the money collected is insufficient for the purchase of a goat, a fowl is substituted and chased into the jungle. After this ceremonial send off of the goddess of disease, two or three coconuts are broken and fragments are distributed among the villagers.[3] *Bida* ceremony against an epidemic disease is widely observed by many tribal people in different parts of the country.

Just as a cholera epidemic is believed to be caused by an enraged goddess, so is the case with the small-pox epidemic. This is believed to be caused by Sitala *mata*. Among the Balahis by whom she is represented by several formless stones smeared over with vermilion, she is worshipped during an attack of small-pox. An offering of boiled rice, curd, and a coconut is made with the promise of the sacrifice of a goat or fowl, if the disease subsides. On the day of fulfilment of the vow, the villagers proceed to the image of the *mata*, make their offering and then return to the village, where the village headman gives a feast. The expenses of the offering and the banquet are covered by a collection to which all the villagers contribute.

Normally when the goddess is not enraged—when there is no small-pox around—Sitala *mata* is worshipped by barrern women to obtain the blessing of a child. Expectant mothers also visit her to obtain a healthy child. For this, the women go singing in procession to the *mata*. One woman carries a brass plate with offerings, a coconut with spices, grain, fruits and flowers around it. The priest of the village, usually a Brahmin, takes the offering, listens to the prayer of the woman and then breaks the coconut on the sacred stones. A small portion of the coconut is put down beside the stones, the rest is distributed among the worshippers as token by the priest. The heaps of coconut shells around every *mata* are witnesses of the *mata's* popularity. Often a miniature *palang* (cot) is offered for the purpose of obtaining offspring.

Among the Tharus, many epidemic diseases are believed to be caused by the seven *matas.* After the particular enraged *mata* has been diagnosed by the medicine-man (*barara*), he utters the following words to propitiate her.

> O ! Mother Bhawani ! have mercy on me today.
> I will offer you a pair of cloves and sprinkle over you.
> You look very graceful under the *peepal* tree with a red flag.
> I will offer *hom* to you by burning sandalwood powder on fire.
> I will sacrifice a goat and offer its head to you.[4]

The Sikligars of Punjab propitiate *mata* Masani which when enraged causes emaciation in children. In fact, emaciation in children among them is labelled as Masani. In order to propitiate this goddess, the child is taken to Sirmur where her shrine is located. A huge earthen *dia* with 32 wicks at the sides, is taken. In the central hollow of this lamp, flowers, pistachio nuts and perfumes are placed. Mustard oil is put in the lamp. Seven vermilion marks are put on the lamp and are also made on the forehead of the patient. All the 32 wicks are lighted. Then the lamp is waved round the head of the child and the mother, and it is carried out of the boundary of the village. There it is left alone and the worshippers go home. They believe that this worship pleases the goddess and the victim is cured.

The shrines of Masani are also worshipped at Gurgaon, Hissar, villages of Keshopur, Mubarakpur and Kalkaji in Delhi State, Ambala, Kangra, Bikaner etc. The Sikligars go to any place which suits them. But as a tribe they mostly go the village of Sooa near Panipat. Here a great fair for the worship of Masani is held annually at the time of Holi. The Sikligars propitiate the goddess Masani by placing some drops of pig blood taken from the ears, nose and tail of the pig, on it. The pig is afterwards let off to its own fate.[5]

Propitiation of the gods and goddesses is sometimes, though rarely, done by a human sacrifice. This is done either in the amidst of a misfortune or disease or as a prophylactic. The ceremony of human sacrifice conducted among the Khonds a few decades ago, has been described.[6]

> The Khonds of Orissa, Bengal and Bihar who had victims known as meriah, set apart and often kept for years, who were to be offered to the Earth Goddess to ensure good crops and immunity from disease, and in particular a fine, deep, rich red for the turmeric harvest. To be acceptable, such a figure had to have been either purchased or else born as the child or a meriah. The Khonds, according to report, occasionally sold their own children for this sacrifice, supposing that in death their souls would be singularly blessed. More often, however, the purchase was from the neighbouring Pans, a criminal weaving tribe, who procured children for this purpose from the plains. In youth, the meriah was generally given as spouse another meriah, and their offspring then would be meriahs too. They were regarded as consecrated beings and treated with extreme affection and respect, and were available for sacrifice either on extraordinary occasions or at the periodic feasts, before the sowing ; so that each family in the village might procure at least once a year a shred of flesh to plant in its field for the boosting of its crop.
>
> Ten or twelve days before the offering, the victim was dedicated, shorn of his hair, and anointed with oil, butter, and turmeric. A season of wild revelry and debauchery followed, at the end of which the meriah was conducted with music and dancing to the meriah grove, a little way from the village, a stand of mighty trees untouched by the axe. Tied there to a post and once more anointed with oil, butter and turmeric, the victim was garlanded. The earth was addressed thus : "O Goddess, we offer to thee this sacrifice ; give to us good seasons, crops, and health" ; the victim was addressed thus : "We bought thee with a price, we did not seize thee, and now, according to custom, we sacrifice thee ; no sin rests upon us". A great struggle to secure magical relics from the decorations of his person—flowers or turmeric—or a drop of his spittle, ensued, and the orgy continued until about noon the following day, when the time came, at last, for the consummation of the rite,

The victim was again anointed with oil...and each person touched the anointed part, and wiped the oil on his own head. In some places they took the victim in procession round the village, from door to door, where some plucked hair from his head, and others begged for a drop of his spittle, with which they anointed their heads. As the victim might not be bound nor make any show of resistance, the bones of his arms and, if necessary, his legs were broken; but often this precaution was rendered unnecessary by stupefying him with opium. The mode of putting him to death varied in different places. One of the commonest modes seems to have been strangulation, or squeezing to death. The branch of a green tree was cleft several feet down the middle; the victim's neck (in other places, his chest) was inserted in the cleft which the priest, aided by his assistants, strove with all his force to close. Then he wounded the victim slightly with his axe, whereupon the crowd rushed at the wretch and hewed the flesh from the bones, leaving the head and bowels untouched. Sometimes he was cut up alive. In Chinna Kimedy he was dragged along the fields, surrounded by the crowd, who, avoiding his head and intestines, hacked the flesh from his body with their knives till he died. Another very common mode of sacrifice in the same district was to fasten the victim to the proboscis of a wooden elephant, which revolved on a stout post, and, as it whirled round, the crowd cut the flesh from the victim while life remained. In some villages, Major Campbell found as many as fourteen of these wooden elephants, which had been used at sacrifices. In one district the victim was put to death slowly by fire. A low stage was formed, sloping on either side like a roof; upon it they laid the victim, his limbs wound round with cords to confine his struggles. Fires were then lighted and hot brands applied, to make him roll up and down the slopes of the stage as long as possible; for the more tears he shed the more abundant would be the supply of rain. Next day the body was cut to pieces.

The flesh cut from the victim was instantly taken home by the persons who had been deputed by each village to bring it. To secure its rapid arrival it was sometimes forwarded by relays of men, and conveyed with postal fleetness fifty or sixty miles. In each village all who stayed at home fasted rigidly until the flesh arrived. The bearer deposited it in the place of public assembly, where it was received by the priest and the heads of families. The priest divided it into two portions, one of which he offered to the Earth Goddess by burying it in a hole in the ground with his back turned, and the priest poured water on the spot from a hill gourd. The other portion of flesh he divided into as many shares as there were heads of houses present. Each head of a house rolled his shred of flesh in leaves, and buried it in his favourite field, placing it in the earth behind his back without looking. In some places each

> man carried his portion of flesh to the stream which watered his fields, and there hung it on a pole. For three days thereafter no house was swept; and, in one district, strict silence was observed, no fire might be given out, no wood cut, and no strangers received. The remains of the human victim (namely, the head, bowels, and bones) were watched by strong parties the night after the sacrifice; and next morning they were burned, alongwith a whole sheep, on a funeral pile. The ashes were scattered over the fields, laid as paste over the houses and granaries, or mixed with the new corn to preserve it from insects. Sometimes, however, the head and bones were buried.

Human sacrifice to propitiate gods and goddesses, and in return to get good health and good crops is still resorted to sometimes, though it is extremely rare now.

EVIL SPIRITS

We have already discussed evil spirits of various types that are believed to cause diseases among the tribal people. In order that they may leave the patient alone and not pester him with disease, different measures are adopted. These measures are: (1) Propitiation, (2) Driving them away, (3) Exorcism. We will discuss these measures separately for the sake of convenience, though in actuality they often overlap.

PROPITIATION

Among the Santhals, such evil spirits are called *bongas*. After the medicine-man (*ojha*) has made the diagnosis that the disease which the patient is suffering from is due to a *bonga*, he starts with the treatment which takes several forms and sometimes is performed in stages. He takes some rice (*adwa chowl*) and vermilion (*sindhur*), packs them in a leaf and asks the patient to touch it with his left hand. Accompanied by a member of the house-hold, the *ojha* goes out in the village taking the rice and vermilion with him. He pricks himself with a thorn on his thigh and belly, so that a little blood oozes out. This blood he smears on the rice and then scatters the rice on the ground in the name of different *bongas*, at the same time uttering incantations requesting the *bongas* to leave the patient. Then the *ojha* returns to the house of the patient, makes some marks with vermilion in the courtyard and takes an oath to offer sacrifices to Saket *bonga.* When the patient does recover and the relations are satisfied that there is no possibility of a relapse occurring, they approach the *ojha* to let him know that they are ready to provide him with the things he had vowed to his *bonga*, the Saket *bonga*. He tells them of the animals he had vowed to be sacrificed. On the appointed day, the head man and deputy head man of the village are also invited. The *ojha* makes the sacrifice of the animal to the *bonga* with an incantation. Afterwards, the animal is prepared for eating, different parts of it going to different people, according to a set procedure. Then they all drink a lot of rice beer. The *ojha* also gets a rupee and a quarter; of which the quarter he gives to the head man. A year having passed after the patient's recovery, the *ojha* gets another five rupees and a loin cloth.

On the other hand, if the patient shows no improvement, the *ojha* puts forward the excuse that the witches must have interfered with his divination. The relations, on their part, may view this as incompetency on the part of the *ojha*, and so either on their own initiative or on the advice of the *ojha*, they may consult another *ojha*. This new *ojha* may say that the first *ojha* was foolish ; or he may discover that the *bonga* involved in this cause is a tedious one, in which case he may resort to a 'mock funeral' to propitiate the difficult bonga. This is done as follows :

The *ojha* makes a diminutive bedstead and a figure out of the stalk of a banana. He then draws some magic marks on the floor, takes a fowl touched by the patient and lets it eat rice placed on the magic spot. With a trident (*trisul*) he draws a bedstead on the ground and again lets the fowl eat rice. He faces it towards the east and breaks its left leg, faces it to the west and breaks its right leg, north and south, breaks its wings. The fowl is made to eat in the name of *Jom raj* (or *Yamraj*, the king of death). Next he takes two grass-hoppers and with the help of incantations and by blowing, transfers the patient's disease on to the grass-hoppers.

Now with the fowl and the grass-hoppers, he goes out of the village alongwith some other people and there sacrifices the fowl and buries the grass-hoppers. Then he gets naked, and sets fire to the bedstead with the figure on it and says "Now *Jom raj* having seen this smoke, depart". This done, the *ojha* returns to the patient's home, catches a black chicken, cuts it open and takes out the liver. A bit of this liver mixed with blood, a bit of the nest of white ants and a few shoots of *dhub* grass (Cynoden dactylon), are all ground together; with this he rubs the chest of the patient and lets him eat this also. This last ceremony is called *jeev dan,* gift of life.

If the patient does not show any improvement after all this, this is considered to be a case of Kisar *bonga,* a recalcitrant spirit which can prove dangerous to the whole village. The patient or his family members approach the village headman who arranges for the services of competent *ojhas* from inside and outside the settlement. The family provides for the following articles: a silk cloth, a small box of red lead, a tassel, a long plait of horse or cow's hair, an iron hairpin, a small box of eye-paint, a winnowing fan, a wide flat basket, an iron stick, five chains, five iron nails, a pair of wooden clogs, a wooden stool, a miniature cart, a straw bundle containing a little each of all the crops cultivated by the Santhals, five rupees, two cows, a pig, a goat, a ram with bell and five fowls. Only a family of some means can provide all this. The *ojha* now summons the Kisar *bonga* by causing a man to be possessed by his spirit. He puts an old and worn winnowing fan in front of the man to be possessed (generally another *ojha*), places a handful of *adwa* rice in it, and says: 'Come my lord (*Gossaiyan*), come thou, to this house. I am calling upon thee, I am crying unto thee, come running, hurry up'. The man soon becomes possessed and the *ojha* asks him: "Well, my Lord, what has thou to say ?" The *bonga* speaks through the mouth of the man possessed and says: "Give me all that is mine." Thereupon all the above-mentioned things are brought forth and the *ojha* says: "Here are thy belongings, art thou pleased or not ?" He says "Pleased", and then enters the cowshed to choose cows for himself. He slaps two cows on the back and comes out again. The *ojha* asks him: "Well, hast thou got everything ?" "Yes, I have", he replies. The sliding bar at the entrance to the cowshed are then let down, and the two cows selected by the *bonga* come out, it is said, of their own accord. These cows are tied together with a rope and the people take hold of all the things and say to the *bonga* : "Come along, lead us to where thy abode is". The two cows lead the way of their own accord, the people following behind. The *ojha* takes the winnowing fan along, carrying it under his arm. Wherever the two cows come to a stand and lie down, there the sacrificial animals are beheaded. The ram's head is strung on the chains and nailed to a tree. The flesh of the sacrificed animals is cooked with rice and eaten there on the spot. All the things brought are left behind at this place. No one touches them ; should anyone do so, the Kisar *bonga* will follow him.

In some cases the cause of a disease is found out to be a *bonga* buried in the house of the patient. This is considered a very serious matter by the Santhals requiring the assistance of the best *ojha*. This *ojha* sits down in the courtyard or in the cattle-shed ; in front he has a large brass cup with a little oil in it. Around him are the people who watch the ceremonies. Looking at the oil he suggests the places where the *bongas* are buried. His assistant marks this place and people dig there. If nothing is found, the *ojha* looks at the oil again and says that the *bongas* have started moving ; he follows them and suggests a place where they come to rest. The *ojha's* assistant then goes in with his stick stamping the ground, until it stops by itself, a sure sign that it is above the buried *bonga*. They dig there and the *bonga* is found. It is generally a small bit of quartz stone painted with vermilion with human hair tied round it. It may also be some other object. After digging it out, he takes it to an open place and performs the necessary sacrifices of goats, pigs etc. which are later eaten up.

The *bongas* are a source of perpetual trouble to the Santhals. They employ all means in their struggle with them and spend much time, energy and money to appease them and to be left alone.[7]

The Saoras believe that a single most important factor that makes the spirits attack human beings is their need of food sacrifice. Hence they resort to it for almost all the diseases. When a medicine-man is called in a patient's house, he asks for a pig; he plucks off a few hair from its neck and passes it over the patient's body ; he lifts up the pig and passes it around the patient's head, feeds the pig, and if it starts eating, it suggests to him that the spirit has accepted the animal.

Some sacrifices are performed not inside the house of the patient but outside in the open. The medicine-man leads the procession. The requisites of the sacrifice including cooking pots, wood and water are carried by the women of the house. On reaching a particular spot, the medicine-man makes a small altar and arranges things before it. He draws a design on the ground, kills the animal and places its head with blood dripping on the altar. The rest of the meat is cooked in two different pots, one for the altar and the other for the people.

The Saoras make drawings on the walls of the houses in honour of the dead so as to keep them pleased and to protect themselves from disease and misfortune. These drawings or ikons are made either by the house-holder himself following the inspiration of his dream or are made by a person called *Ittalmaran* who has a professional interest in it. In the latter case, the *Ittalmaran* comes to the house and spends a night there before beginning work. In the evening the house-holder places a small basket of rice and a pot of palm wine on the ground before the wall on which the picture is to be made. If necessary, his wife washes the wall with fresh red earth and water to provide a good background. The *Ittalmaran* uses a twig slightly splayed at the end as a brush; for paint he has rice flour and water mixed in a small bowl, or sometimes ashes and water, a mixture which looks a dirty grey at first but dries a sharp white; occasionally he gives emphasis to his figures with a little lamp black or red ochre. These ikons are the one-dimensional houses of the spirits. They are made for use rather than for display. Often they are located in the darkest corner of a house, or may be hidden behind gourds and pots. In fact, it is desirable that human beings should not look at them, for there is always a danger that a careless word or gesture may offend the spirits. In the painting itself, symmetry and balance are less important than the inclusion of everything likely to please the spirit for whom it is made, as for example, a comb, a lizard etc.[8]

An interesting sacrificial ceremony is performed among the Baigas. When a person gets a sore-throat so that he cannot swallow food, the medicine-man *(gunia)* diagnoses this to be a case of seizure of the throat by Narayan Deo-Baro Deo, a very unpleasant demon. The remedy he suggests is the sacrifice of a pig when the patient gets well. When the patient does recover, the ceremony called the *Laru-Kaj* is performed. Cow dung is smeared on the ground near the threshold of the house, a small square is made with wheat flour and some rice is put upon it. In a corner is kept a smouldering cake of cow-dung and a little *ghee* is dropped on it and the pig brought in the square and the following words uttered: "With a happy mind, eat this rice. We put our trust in you. From today may our children live happily". If the pig does not eat rice, it means that Narayan Deo intends to give more trouble and every effort is made that the pig eats rice, coconut, liquor etc. But as soon as the pig puts some thing in the mouth, at once the people around take two rice pounders (*musars*) and crush its testicles. They also cut off a bit of its tail and left ear and bury these in a hole in the square which is later filled with mud and sprinkled over with liquor. After this ceremony is over, the pig is considered a vehicle (*sawari*) of Narayan Deo; it is given the best of food and all attention for three long years. When three years are over, the family collects together plenty of rice, *kodai* and liquor and invites people to the house on a Saturday.

Two pits are dug, in two different sizes in the courtyard. A swing (*phulera*) with *bel*-leaves is prepared and this is tied with a turmeric-coloured thread to a pole in the middle of the house. The place below is smeared with cow-dung and a square is made with flour and in it is placed rice and a fire is burnt in it. The people who participate in this ceremony are the patient, the chief medicine-man (*dewar gunia*), a relation of the patient called *kamri*, three *barwas* who will get possessed by the spirit and two other old men. All these people observe a fast for the day and at the time of the ceremony, say: "Today we do the *Laru-Kaj* in truth".

The pig is now brought in and rice is put before it to eat. The *dewer gunia* says: "Look Maharaj, today we give you rice. Don't give us any trouble". As soon as it accepts the food it is lifted up and its front legs are tied. A lamp is waved round it thrice, its mouth is forced open, and more rice put into it. Boiling water is then poured over its phallus and this water is allowed to run into the pit dug near the door. Then three men hold the pig by its hind legs and push its head into the pit which by now is half full of water. As this is done, earth is thrown into the pit so that it surrounds the pig's head and it suffocates. The pig is now taken out, washed and singed over fire. Now this is taken to the larger pit and cut up and the blood allowed to fall into this pit. The head and liver of the pig is taken, wrapped in *bel*-leaves and taken by two old men to the swing (*phulera*) and kept there while the people sing sacrificial songs. When the *phulera* begins to swing of its own accord after a tug or two is given to it, it is presumed that the Narayan Deo has come over and is riding over it.

Then the pig is cooked. The *kamri* takes pieces of it in the name of Narayan Deo, Mai Dharti, Bara Deo and many other spirits. Simultaneously the three *barwas* get possessed and there is much shouting and dancing. Everybody gets drunk.

A plate of meat and a basket of rice is placed beneath the swing. Eight men come in and sit all round and leaves are put ready on the floor; then the old woman and the *kamri* and any strangers present, distribute the meat, a share of rice and four scraps of meat for every household. Then they all have their supper, and when every one else has eaten, the *dewar* and those who have been fasting with him have their share. After supper, there is dancing throughout the night.[9]

Among the Lepchas of Sikkim in the Himalayas, the sacrifice of an animal to the spirit causing the disease is considered one of the important methods of treatment. An animal such as an ox is sacrificed to the spirit and it is presumed that the ox being larger in size than the patient, should be easily acceptable to the spirit. The things necessary for the ceremony such as *torma* of rice, butter, *chi*, butter lamps, incense, holy water etc. are brought and arranged. A bullock is then brought near the front door of the house. A rope is tied to its right horn and the other end of the rope is taken into the house and given to the patient to hold. The medicine-man (*bong-thing*) then comes near the ox and says: "Instead of the life of the woman, take the life of the ox. I am giving you the life of this ox in lieu of the life of this woman. His life is of greater value than hers. Take it ! The body and the soul of the ox are greater than those of this person. Take them ! Leave the people in peace." As he says this, he offers *chi*, rice and butter, laying these three sacrificial gifts on the forehead of the animal. Then he says with great emphasis : "The body and the soul of this animal must be sacrificed". The ox is then instantly killed by the blow of an axe on the nape of its neck. The head is severed from the body. Except for the head, loins, tail and entrails, the left side of the animal is sacrificed to the demons.

The right side of the animal together with the head, the entrails, the loins are offered to different gods by saying : "...verify this, O God, that we are sick. Come hither and tell it ; come here and say it. How the head is racked with pain, the loins ache, the body, the hands, the feet are paining and the belly is aching. This O God verify. Come hither and state it. How the demons bite that, examine ye gods, come here and tell it. In this manner, I sacrifice this bound bull for the sick person. I offer this substitute of life ; I sacrifice this bound bull as a substitute for the body. I sacrifice this bound bull to Gebu". This ends the ceremony. A part of the meat is taken by the *bong-thing*, a small part is eaten up later, the rest is given back to the family so that they may sell it and meet part of the expenses.[10]

Treatment

The Lepchas offer different animals as sacrifice for different diseases. To get rid of the spirit (*sor moong*) that causes violent death, or the spirit that causes genito-urinary diseases (*apang moong*), a goat is sacrificed. This is tied by a long rope which has three knots on it. The members of the household touch these knots and then touch the medicine-man, *mun*. The latter then requests the spirits to accept the sacrifice of the animal and to leave the patient. He then kills the animal and offers parts of it together with rice, a rupee, a ceremonial scarf, the patient's ornaments and clothes (these are offered only symbolically), a cup of *chi* and different grains to the spirits causing the disease. He then constructs a phallus out of wood, which is called in its guardian function *moong long tik*. This is set up between two stones leaning slightly forward, somewhere in the forest, and anointed with the blood of the slain animal and *chi*. The is presumed to keep the spirits away, for no spirit can pass this guardian.[12]

Offering the sacrifice of an animal, along with some other rituals in the name of a patient so as to appease the evil spirit causing the disease is found almost among all tribal people in India. Among the Balahis, when the medicine-man (*barwa*) makes the diagnosis that the disease in a patient is due to the ill-disposition of the Ghatwala Deo, he takes a red thread, cuts off three pieces from it and asks the patient to tie them around his waist, upper arm and neck. Then he asks for some liquor, a cock, eggs, coconuts, almonds, and some other things. These are brought and offered to the Ghatwala's stone, situated generally near a steep spot of the road or in a *nala*. Then the relative of the patient asks the *barwa* what the patient may eat for the duration of his sickness. Usually the *barwa* forbids him to eat *khira* (cucumber), *urad ki dal* (pulse), rice, and oil. The *barwa* is quite positive that he cannot be held responsible for the failure of his cure unless these restrictions are observed to the letter. But Balahis do not care much about restrictions, especially when they are sick, so that the *barwa* is usually well provided with an excuse when his performance proves unsuccessful.

Among the Gaddis, Kailu bir or Kailung is said to harm a woman expecting a child. To propitiate this spirit, a pregnant woman puts away four copper coins alongwith her necklace invoking the name of Kailu. Two or three months after her safe delivery, the priest and the woman together worship the demon reciting incantations. A goat is sacrificed as thanks-giving.

Gunga is another malignant spirit among the Gaddis, believed to attack cattle. This demon is worshipped by offering it an iron pan. This rite is held in the cattle-shed where the demon is worshipped in front of a sacred fire, and a male goat is killed. A few drops of its blood are sprayed on the pan. Then a few cakes are served to members of the household, and the other sweetmeats are buried.

Among the Bhils, the *badwas* initiate the propitiation sacrificial procedure by uttering magical formula such as the following :

> Bismilla, Rehman, Rehim,
> Ghats over ghats—
> Who will eat ?
> The memorial-stone *Pir*.
> A monkey on a banyan tree,
> It has a big tail.
> Every flower has a lamp burning.
> Fly, fly away.
> If you do not go from here,
> May Valandev's displeasure fall on you.
> Bali fisherman and Bali river.
> Come stooping low :
> Stooping they worked evil ;
> I ask them to fly away helter skelter.

If they do not, I will bleed them through the nose.
Who can do it ?
The memorial-stone *Pir's*
Uncle, Kaka Gosai,
Went and began to dance.
I take out a mare to ride ;
And enjoy very much.
Memorial *Pir* is a good *Pir*.

They sacrifice a goat or a fowl, or offer some liquor and request the spirit to leave the victim. When it is the case of fever, the *badwa* summons Agyo khambo, Rohonyo khambo and Jaldeo ; when somebody suffers from an evil eye, he waves a lamp in the name of Pae Devi, paints a *swastik* on it and leaves it on the bank of a stream ; if it is a snake bite, the gods called to attend are Kali Chudas, Sekh Lag (Shesh Nag), Kalu Vanvah Deo, Taman Mal, Dhaman Mal and Ima and Khima Garudis (the last two are heavenly exorcists who, if called, can take back the poison of any serpent). If it is a case of some evil wind that has hurt, Kalo Waro is called.

DRIVING OUT THE SPIRIT

Some spirits are propitiated ; others are just driven away. Different methods are used for this latter purpose : some are just mechanical ; others transfer the spirit to some other object and then get rid of it ; still others try to deceive the spirit.

In order to drive away the spirits causing disease, the procedure adopted by the tribal people in the Nicobar islands is to make scare-devils in the village hall on the beach. These are made of leaves tied on long sticks from the walls. People push them forward and sing *ma-a-fai* songs. When the swinging stops, the medicine-men spear the devil-spirits. The devils are visible to medicine-men only and not to others. When these devils are speared, they make all sorts of noises in pain. The procedure of swinging and spearing is repeated many times during the night. In the morning the devils are sent off on rafts with the outgoing tide, and that day is a day of rest.[13]

When a cattle disease appears in an Oraon village in Chota Nagpur, a day is fixed for driving away the disease-spirit and everybody is informed. In the evening of the appointed day, every family leaves one or more earthen vessels in front of their huts, and as soon as their evening meal is finished, all except the bachelors keep indoors and maintain strict silence. At about midnight, the young bachelors assemble at the village ground (*akhara*), strip themselves naked, and take up cudgels in their hands. The village cow-herd too is there with a wooden cow-bell, which represents the evil spirit, suspended from his neck or waist. At a signal, the naked bachelors give him chase, with shouts resembling the bellowing of cattle and on the way go on striking all the earthen pots and pans, kept before the huts of the village, with their cudgels. Should they happen to meet on the way a villager or a stranger, they belabour him with their sticks ; and also those who may be heard talking or making any manner of sound. Thus they run on making a show of chasing the cow-herd. On reaching the boundary of the village, the cow-herd advances a few paces into the limits of the adjoining village, quickly drops down his cow-bell and beats a hasty retreat. His pursuers too go up to the spot where the cow-bell has been dropped by the cow-herd, and there leave their cudgels and return to their village perfectly satisfied that the disease-spirit is now safely chased out of their village. The people in the other village repeat the process, until the disease-spirit is driven out of the district.[14]

Among the Dankas, several rites are performed for the protection of the village as a whole against epidemic diseases which affect cattle or human beings. Ceremonial rite of *melvado kadhva*, banishing the evil spirit from the village, is one of them. In this ceremony, three to five leading members of the village meet and decide on the performance of the rites. The whole village is invited, and a circle of cotton thread is drawn round the village and milk poured over that thread. A small cart *(ruth)* is prepared and a small effigy of the disease wrapped in a piece of red cloth is placed on it. An earthen lamp containing *ghee* is lighted in token of worship and a coconut and some money is placed as a departing gift. The headman then dances before the *ruth* and on his instruction, the *ruth* is carried in a procession round the affected streets of the village and then ceremonially taken out of the village to the temple of Kalika at Pavagadh. An intimation is sent with an invitation to give a reception to the *ruth: "Melvado rath valava avjo"*. So the people of the other villages get ready to carry the *ruth* to the next village. This continues from village to village till the final destination is reached. At the temple of Kalika, the *bhuva* worships the goddess, sacrifices a goat and a coconut and the *prasad* is then distributed among the people assembled there.[15] The ceremony is practised among the Bhils as well.

Among the Lepchas of Sikkim, Himalayas, in order to drive away the ghost of a child, called *num-een moong*, which kills children by infantile diarrhoea, after sacrificing an animal, the patient is taken to a narrow stream. He stands on the right of the stream and the *mun* on the left of it. Then a 'gateway' is made over the stream by means of two bundles of elephant grass and brambles ; and the *mun* holds in each hand a bundle made out of wild rasp-berries, nettles and other thorny plants. These bundles he dips in water and passes over *(pek)* the patient several times ; then a bamboo *chi*-holder filled with blood and *chi* and closed at both the ends, and a leaf filled with fried rice and meat and blood, are passed over the patient and thrown through the gateway for the devil. The bunches of thorny plants are also thrown through the gateway and finally the gateway is filled up with thorny plants so that it looks like a tree. The *mun* does this at two other places, one above and one below the first spot. This he does alone and then returns straight to his own house without meeting anybody ; should he meet people *num-een moong* will start haunting him.[16]

In order to transfer the evil spirit into some other object and then to get rid of it, the Lepchas perform a ceremony called *Moong Sot*. This ceremony is performed by the surviving members of the family in which a member has either died violently or committed suicide. If this ceremony is not performed, it is believed that the devil will return and claim another victim. A dead goat is skinned except for its legs below the joint. A hole is dug and above it is made a small shelter of bamboos thatched with reeds. At a little distance is set up a red head of banana flower stuck into the ground and by its side is stuck a pole on top of which is attached the goat's heart; it is so contrived that the blood drips on the banana flower. There is a bow-man with an arrow in his bow ready to shoot; there is the *mun* at one side not looking at the pole, and there are other men armed with knives all round. Presently the *mun* starts shivering uncontrollably and summons the devil in a loud voice. As he calls, some insect or other climb up the pole towards the heart. The bow-man must shoot it with his arrow before the insect reaches it. As soon as he has shot it, he must call to the *mun* to say whether he has hit or missed the insect; if he has missed, the *mun* must recall it. When the insect is killed, it and the goat are chopped to pieces by the bystanders with their knives and buried in the prepared hole; stones and earth are rammed on top of the sacrifice to fill up the hole, and make a little mound.

Among the Sherpas of Nepal, a public rite of driving out the spirits known as *tsirim* is held twice a year in April and October. The *tsirim* is held in the village *gomba* and at least two lamas are required for its performance. Figurines of different gods (*tormas*) are prepared and arranged, offerings are given to them, incantations recited to propitiate them. The climax of the ceremony is reached when the senior lama calls upon all the spirits (*shrindi*) to enter the Lokpar *torma* and on the floor of the temple another lama makes a pattern of flour, and from this design, a path of flour leads out of the temple into the open. Several young boys, carrying *kukri* and swords, stand up before Lokpar and three times rush shouting along the flour-path to the temple door. This is repeated several times, until the senior lama carries it outside the temple. Lamas and laymen follow it shouting and brandishing swords. Lokpar *torma* is taken out of the village and there the boys strike it with their swords. This completes the driving out of the *shrindi,* and every one returns contentedly to the *gomba* where the edible *torma* is distributed among the participants.

In order to hood-wink the spirit causing the disease, the lamas among the Lepchas make the patient go through the smaller squares of a big magic square, gradually having all his appearance changed : he starts off dressed in black, carrying a stick and ends up dressed in white with a bow and arrow. This is believed to fool the devil, as is the device of taking a new name for a whole year.[18]

EXORCISM

By far the most potent method of driving out spirits, is exorcism, the expelling of demons through the magic power of the word. As a matter of fact, all other methods are usually combined with incantations. Certain words have to be spoken at the right moment if the spirit is to yield to mechanical pressure or to let itself be transferred. Either these incantations have the form of commands ordering the demon to relinquish its host ; or they are appeals to more powerful spirits for intercession ; or they are simply spells, words combined in such a way that a spirit, when it hears them, cannot resist them.[19] The ritual of exorcism takes different forms among the different tribes of India.

Among the Sansis, when a person is possessed by an evil spirit, the medicine-man (*chela*) is called. He makes the patient sit in front of him and gives him a fumigation of *guggal*. He drives an iron weapon into the ground and begins to recite the following long incantation :

Shoot Madan Shah Ali with an arrow stretching your bow.
By the grace of Shah Shamas hit your target perfectly.
By the kindness of Guru Gorakh Nath do away with the evils of cremation ground.
Knock down Hanuman and Nar Singh.
With the force of the knowledge of your Guru, kill all the magicians.
Utter, Lachhman, Sita, Ram and kill evil spirits.
I have tied all the Jins and Bhoots since I have drunk a cup from my teacher.
All the evil spirits and monsters have become our slaves.
Since I have recited shabad at the door of Guru Nanak,
Nanak is on our side, none can harm us. Kill all the evil spirits of all the communities.
All the *brave* and idol-worshippers should be under control.
Bind all the organs, Lachhman, Ram and Sita, bind sword and gun.
Bind gun, musket, spear, mortar etc.
Bind all the small and great, saints, beggars and whole of the city.
Bind the mountain, the *brave*.
Bind music, sound, yogi, ascetic completely.
Bind the tree, wealth, treasure and wind.
Bind oceans and seas and bind underworlds and running rivers.
Bind everything, in all the directions at all the times.
Bind underworlds, habitations, villages and cities.
Bind the very inside of hearts.
Bind sixty-four jognan, earth and sky.
Bind all the musical instruments, dholak and thirty-six ragas.
Bind snakes, scorpions and poisonous cobras.
Bind the devil with a long lock of chain.
Bind the fairy named Ashak and bind whole of the country of the fairies.
Bind the river Rewa and Jamuna.
Bind the rivers Saraswati, Krishna, Narbada and Godavari.
Bind Jin, Bhoot, Churel, Pret, Danoon, all of them.
Remember your sainted dead ancestors,
Nihaloo, Gandoo.
Remember Hefam, Narotam and Baba Toto.
Every evil spirit must present itself before my Guru.
I will cast out all of the Jins, Bhoots, Churels and Prets with a sound beating.

After this racitation is over, the *chela* begins to shake his head in quick movements and so does the patient after a few minutes. This is called *khedna*. Then the *chela* questions the patient about the spirit in a very dignified voice. It is believed that it is the spirit which is making the patient wag his head rapidly and the spirit will speak through the mouth of the patient. If the spirit refuses to speak, the *chela* catches the patient by the locks of his hair and beats him and threatens to put excreta, beef or pork in the mouth of the spirit and thus makes the spirit speak. The *chela* orders the spirit to give up the patient and if it refuses, he beats the patient again with a stick. At last the spirit promises to leave the patient readily never to revisit him or his family again. If the *chela* does not believe the spirit, he asks it to provide some evidence of its departure; this the spirit provides by knocking open a door or displacing a material object.[20]

Among the Balahis of Nimar, when a patient is possessed by an evil spirit, the medicine-man (*janka*) takes him and his relatives to a place of worship. If the patient is unable to walk, the *janka* and the relatives visit the shrine alone. There the *janka* recites some incantations, an example of which is as follows :

> *Allah, Bismillah, Raheman, Rahim, Kali, Maha Kali, Brahma ki sali, dono hath se bajawa tali—Agar yeh kam siddh nahi karega, to teri ma ki nari kalega* :
> Allah, Bismillah, Raheman, Rahim, Kali, Great Kali, Brahma's sister-in-law, with joined hands I pray : Save : But if you do not cure the patient, I shall pierce the private part of your mother :

The Balahis believe that such threats (*gali*) are essential for an effective exorcism. The *janka* now makes from six to seven knots in a red string. After each knot, he recites an incantation adding some hearty curses (*gali*) at the end as threats. Then an offering is made, the deity worshipped, and the string tied round the neck, wrist, or arm of the patient. A meal is served to the *janka* and the relatives of the patient ; the patient himself is not allowed any food on this occasion. The *janka* then asks for his fee, and receives two or four annas, very rarely a rupee. The money is placed on the *arti* (brass plate) on which the offerings had been carried to the evil spirit. Young women and children are not allowed to attend these ceremonies.

The exorcism of a *churel* is more complicated and difficult than that of any other evil spirit. Only a powerful *barwa* can perform it. When he has to perform the exorcism of a *churel*, he comes to the Balahi patient's house and squats there before him or her in mute observation. Sometimes the patient is placed within the iron-tyre of a cart wheel in the belief that within it the spirit can cause the patient no harm ; but if during exorcism he happens to walk out of the protection he would die instantaneously. He orders some one to bring a smouldering dung-cake and puts some pungent spices over it. The patient is asked to bend over the fire and inhale the fumes. For the same purpose a sheet is thrown over the patient and the fire so that the patient inhales all the smoke. Because of it the patient soon begins to tremble and this is presumed to be a sign that the *churel* has entered the patient's body. The *barwa* now recites some spells and then asks the spirit to reveal its identity. Till such time as the spirit answers through the patient's mouth, the patient is made to inhale the fumes. The patient sometimes gets dizzy, vomits or becomes almost unconscious, but the *barwa* persists. At last he does get the answer and then asks the spirit what offerings she would welcome. The *churel* reluctantly, compelled by the magic power of the *barwa*, discloses the conditions under which she is prepared to depart from the patient. The *barwa* takes off the sheet with which the patient is covered and takes a shoe or sandal and puts it into the patient's mouth. Holding the *barwa's* shoe between his teeth, he is led to a tree. He is told to touch the tree with his head and at the same time open his mouth so that the shoe falls to the ground. The *barwa* grasps the hair of the patient and drives a nail through it into the tree. Then he cuts the hair off close to the head. At this moment, the *churel* is believed to leave her victim and enter the tree ; the patient falls to the ground unconscious. He may be very weak for some time, but he is cured of his disease. The *barwa* receives a handsome present for his exorcism. It certainly is a hard strain on him, physically as well as mentally. He is indeed often quite exhausted after he has performed the exorcism.[21]

Among the Tharus, when a person is possessed by an evil spirit, he or she begins to cry and assumes a fearful appearance. The medicine-man (*brara*) then catches hold of the hair or clothes of the victim in his hand firmly and recites the following *mantra* to dispel the evil spirit :

> Lanka is surrounded by water like a fort by a mote.
> Let magic work. Help ! Help. Raja Ram.
> Which spirits are coming ? The Massan's spirit is coming.
> Ghatyana and 'Sokha' spirits are coming.
> Sink half a yard of ground and drown the enemy.
> As well as the bhuts and evil spirits.
> Drown the 'mariya' and massan.
> I implore Fatama Bibi (Daughter of the prophet, Mohammed) for her influence.
> May God make the *mantra* effective.[22]

Among the Sherpas of Nepal, it is the Lhawa who carries out the exorcism. The way he carries out the ritual is illustrated by one of the cases described below :

> Sonam was ill through gorging himself with very high dried mutton and was obviously suffering from food poisoning. The Khamba lhawa A-Tutu was called in, but before he came, Dorje Ngunjdu applied some ritual first and by burning, on a small stone slab, incence and a few woollen threads from the cloak of a great lama and waving the slab with smouldering wool round the patient's head, called upon evil spirits (*shrindi*) and witches (*pem*) to depart. He then took the slab out of the house, placed some butter on the smouldering embers, surrounded slab with other food offerings, and chased away the spirits with vehement spells, throwing dust and dirty leaves after them, and finally bolted the door.
>
> When A-tutu arrived, he at once occupied himself with the prostrate Sonam. He had not brought any of his paraphernalia and first called for a

rosary. This was fetched from a neighbouring house, and the lhawa then let the beads pass through his hands, and finally pronounced that a *shrindi* had attacked Sonam. This *shrindi* or *norpa* was the ghost of Lakba Gelbu, the late owner of the house in which we were living. Lakba Gelbu had been killed by an avalanche some twelve years previously and it was common knowledge that he had turned into a malignant ghost. The fact that Sonam was shivering and felt cold to the touch was connected with Lakba Gelbu's death in the snow.

When I asked A-Tutu to discover a way of propitiating the *shrindi*, who was causing Sonam's illness, he sent for the requisites used in every seance. They were brought in a basket and from this A-Tutu took two large brass cups and seven small zinc cups, a large and a small mirror, and the crown-like head-dress (*ringa*). He then asked for two small tables and improvised a stepped altar using one of my table cloths as a covering. Next he asked for a lamp, filled it with butter and placed it on the altar in the middle of the seven zinc cups. One of these was filled with beer, one with milk and the remaining five were filled with rice; rice-grains were also put on a plate together with two strips of white cloth and two strips of red cloth. A-Tutu then put butter marks on the two metal mirrors and placed them on the altar.

When the altar had been prepared, a large double membrane drum was fetched from the *gomba* and erected next to the altar. Juniper twigs and pieces of smouldering wood were placed on a shovel and put next to the lhawa's seat.

The scene was now set and the seance could begin. Standing upright in front of the improvised altar and holding the large mirror and a white cloth, A-Tutu began to chant in a low voice. He repeated this holding the smaller brass mirror and then put the two mirrors into the two brass bowls filled with rice. Holding the plate with rice, he then sprinkled rice grains over the altar calling at the same time on various divinities and inviting them to come.

A-Tutu then sat down facing a low table, which had been placed at right angle to the altar. In this position, he continued to chant and now and then scatter rice grains. Soon he began to tremble, breathe heavily and to utter occasional grunts. Trembling, he took the head-dress and put it shakily on his head. He then grasped a bundle of ribbons, while with his right hand he beat out a rhythm on the drum. His knees trembled all the time as he sat cross-legged and his head swayed from one side to the other. A thin singing sound turned now and then into a high falsetto alternating with hissing and noisy blowing through the nose. Gradually his face, which had borne a tortured expression, assumed a peaceful and happy look.

Dorje Ngungdu, who sat facing the lhawa, tied a white ribbon to the other ribbons of the *ringa* head-dress, and put some rice grains into A-Tutu's hand.

> The *shrindi* was now believed to be visible in the mirror, and three women present at the seance saluted the *shrindi* with folded hands, prostrating themselves before it.
>
> I was then asked to provide a small silver coin, and this was placed on the altar as an offering to the *shrindi* who was requested to enter the lhawa's body.
>
> A-Tutu then violently shook his head until the head-dress slipped down. This was necessary, for the head-dress belonged to his tutelary god, and it had to be removed before the way was clean for the *shrindi*. The drumming then stopped, and the lhawa fell backwards as if doubled up with pain, and threw himself about. He shivered violently and seemed to suffer the same pain as Sonam. Eventually he raised his arms, and as he opened his mouth, he breathed heavily like someone under an almost intolerable pain. At last he began to speak.
>
> Dorje Ngungdu and the women present asked questions, and the lhawa replied haltingly between sighs and whistles. The ghost of Lakba Gelbu now spoke through A-Tutu's mouth, and he began by blaming Sonam for having come to live in the house which belonged to him. He then asked for a specific carpet, which had belonged to him, and this was found in the store room and placed before the lhawa. All the time shivering and trembling, A-Tutu then rubbed his thighs and back. The *shrindi* did not relish the beer, saying that it was bad, and called for *rakshi*, *i.e.*, distilled spirit. This seemed to satisfy him.
>
> The ghost of Lakba Gelbu, always speaking through the mouth of A-Tutu, then said that by mid-day he would have carried Sonam away, but because of the offerings given by Dorje Ngungdu early in the morning, he now relented and would spare Sonam's life.
>
> After that there was much questioning and answering ; the spirit of Lakba Gelbu left but other spirits possessed A-Tutu. One and a half hours after the beginning of the performance, A-Tutu came out of his trance and without much ado packed up his ritual objects, and the rice which was his perquisite. He also was paid four rupees and kept the half-rupee coin offered to one of the gods.[23]

Evil spirits are believed to shun certain colours, metals, fumes etc. ; hence these substances are used widely to keep the evil spirits away. The spirits avoid black, red and yellow colour, hence vermilion is commonly used ; they avoid iron, hence articles made of this metal are kept under the head while going to sleep ; red and yellow threads *(mauli)* signify that any spirit which dares to come near will be tied up with it ; leaves of certain trees are hung above the door for the same purpose ; smell of *ghee* and asfoetida, the spirits avoid ; they also avoid certain figures which are commonly made near the entrances of the houses.

In order to prevent an attack by evil spirits, different means are adopted by different tribal communities. Some of them do not carry the corpse over the threshold of the main door ; sometimes a hole is cut in the wall, or a tiny side entrance is used. The mourners, on their return, cut away the house-ladder and creep in through a hole cut in the back wall, in order to baffle the ghost. A similar device is that of making the corpse-bearers change places on the road to the grave, and turn the corpse in the opposite direction. With the same intention, the mourners are forbidden to look back when leaving the cemetery. Sometimes the repression of the evil spirit is secured in a physical way: the thumb and great toes of the corpse are tied together to prevent the ghost from walking, or it is tied up in a cotton bag. Among the Koyis of Madras, when a girl dies of syphilis, a fish-trap is erected to catch the spirit and prevent it from entering the village. Some people when returning from the funeral, fling pebbles towards the pyre to scare the spirit, or make a barricade of thorny bushes between the grave and the house. With the same intention, the names of deceased relatives are taboo for a generation, to avoid recalling their spirit. One reason given for the wide-spread custom of shaving after a death is that it changes the appearance of the mourners so as to deceive the pursuing spirit. To prevent the spirit rising from the grave and walking, it is common practice, particularly among some low castes, to bury the corpse face downwards and to pile stones and thorn on the grave.

In the case of a *churel*, a very dangerous spirit, sometimes the corpse of a woman dying pregnant is cut open and the child removed ; or the spirit is scared by fire, earth, water ; or iron nails are driven into her fingers, and the thumbs fastened together with iron rings. The Oraons carry the corpse of such a woman to a distance, break the feet above the ankles, and twist them round bringing the heels in front, into which they drive long thorns ; they bury her deep in the earth face downward and [place with her corpse the bones of an ass, saying at the same time : 'If you come home, may you turn into an ass' ; the roots of a palm-tree are also buried with her, with the curse : 'May you come home when the leaves of the palm wither'. When they leave the burial ground, they spread mustard seeds along the road, saying : 'When you try to come home, pick up all these.'[24]

Many of the death-rites are performed with the intention that the spirit of the dead will be satisfied and not return to trouble the living.

TREATMENT OF WITCHCRAFT

Belief in witches and witchcraft as a cause of illness and sudden death in human beings is very common. We have already seen how the witches learn their craft and how they practice it.

Among Santhals, all women are believed to be potential witches, be she a mother, sister or wife of the patient himself. After it has been diagnosed through *sunuṃ bonga* that the cause of an illness is witchcraft, an attempt is made to find out who is the witch that has caused the disease or death. The villagers collect under the leadership of the village headman, and go to a bank of the stream where they plant a number of freshly-cut branches, each one in the name of a relative of the patient and the households of the suspected people in the same or neighbouring villages. As they plant each branch, they apply *sindhur* over it and scatter *adwa* rice around and say : "Greeting then, Day-god of the heavens ! Thou art spread out like a mat. Thou hast overspread the four corners, the four worlds, here then, as thou seest, we have planted branches to ascertain the delinquent ; what is guilty thou wilt pronounce guilty ; let that drop up and wither ; if it be otherwise, thou wilt bud fresh, thou wilt remain unaltered and sound."

This ceremony only narrows the field of suspicion ; to pinpoint the particular individual is the job of the *jan*, the man who is an adept at divination. After the first ceremony, the relatives of the patient and of the suspected people and some other village people go to the *jan* with the necessary materials such as one betel nut, one leaf-cup, some *adwa* rice, mustard oil, *sindur*, resin of the *sal* tree, and some leaves of the *bel* tree. He fixes the date and the time of the ceremony.

The *jan* puts down small handfuls of the *adwa* rice in a number of places in the name of different *bongas*, puts alongside all these heaps of *bel* leaves, and finally, having mixed the oil and *sindur*, puts *sindur* marks in front of the rice. He then throws the resin on burning coal, blows the shell, sounds the *bonga* bell and worships his *bongas*. He now becomes 'possessed' by the spirit of divination and in this state commences to utter incessantly. Ultimately he reveals to the gathering the individual acting as a witch and causing the disease. The whole village abides by his pronouncement. The woman pronounced a witch is harassed in every possible way ; she may even be driven away from her home or village.[25]

Among the Saoras, the witch-doctor is called *gardi chela*. When a patient, diagnosed to be sick due to witchcraft, comes to him, he starts playing on his *dupatra*, a stringed musical instrument. He throws a *kauri* (a kind of shell) towards the patient and casts a spell on him so that the patient starts dancing and finally discloses the name of the witch (*dayan*), who gave him a herb (*booti*). The *gardi chela* then makes the patient put his palms and feet into a bucketful of water. Then he brushes the patient's body with a peacock's broom. Particles of dust and feather etc. fall into the water. This treatment he continues for about a week or so till the patient recovers.[26]

Among the Dankas, sudden illness in a person or death of several animals at a time is considered to be caused by a witch. The services of the village priest variously called *bhagat, bhuva* or *badva* are acquired. He gets possessed and finds out the witch (*dakini*). The woman declared a witch is apprehended ; sometimes she is tied upside down and a fire is lighted below her. Sometimes a witch is reported to die during such a procedure.[27] A similar procedure of punishing the witch exists among the Bhils as well.

In order to catch a witch 'red-handed', the Gond and Bhumia adopt the following procedure : At the time of the new moon, after the festival of Diwali, the witches are believed to go to the shrine of their tutelary goddess, undress there at night and learn new spells by repeating them over and over again. Village people stealthily go to the temple at night and while the witches are dancing, they put burn marks on the clothes cast aside by the witches, and then return home. The witches don't notice that, and in the morning when every woman comes to the wall or pond to get water, their marked clothes are recognized and the identity of the witches established. The village council is then summoned and the charge against the witches is made. If they deny, they are beaten with castor branches—other sticks are believed not to hurt them at all—till they confess their guilt.[28]

Among the Baigas, when the witch has been detected, she is made to drink urine from a shoe, her nose is slit, for this inhibits the power of her evil eye. She may be forced to eat a mixture of blood and rice, with some pig's dung added ; often burning chilli, salt, human hair, and *kodan* husks are thrust into her vagina.[29]

TREATMENT OF MAGIC

A disease caused through magic is cured through counter-magic. This counter-magic may be needed to bring out an 'intruded object' from the body, or to recover the lost soul of the patient ; it may be in the form of a charm or a protective amulet.

Pulling out an intruded object: In a patient diagnosed to be suffering from a disease caused by object intrusion, the medicine-man among the Saoras asks the patient to sit in front of the altar. He takes between his thumb and the first finger of the right hand, a few grains of dedicated rice or a tuft of hair from the back of the neck of the sacrificial animal. Sometimes he takes a broom for the purpose. Holding this, he passes his hand over the patient's head, back, arms and legs. Then he throws away what he was holding in his hand and blows in the patient's ears and sucks, bites and kisses his body. While doing this, he goes through the notions of removing something from the patient's body and putting that in his loin-cloth. He cleans his teeth with a piece of ginger and blows again in the patient's ears. In this way he succeeds in removing the intruded object from the patient's body and thus brings about a cure.[30]

Among the Santhals, the *ojha* utters a magic incantation, blows over the patient and with a feather or straw from the broom, touches the body from the head towards the toes and sings a *jharni*.

In the Nicobar island, the patient is made to lie down on a mat or the floor in a dark room and is covered over with leaves. After making some gestures, blowing and making a variety of sounds, he touches the patient's body beneath the leaves and out comes a piece of iron, charcoal, a pig's tooth, a house lizard and some other object which had intruded into the patient's body. The patient recovers instantaneously.

Recalling a Lost Soul: After the diagnosis of soul-loss has been made in a patient, in the Nicobar islands, the relatives and friends of the patient go to the fields to entice back the patient's soul or spirit. This is done in the morning or the evening. Every one takes a bunch of leaves of a plant called *to-ki-teuiny* in his hand. The spirit is known to hide in such leaves and it is with them that they intend to catch the spirit. When this has been done, they hand over all the branches to the medicine-man who wraps them in a large palm leaf. This spirit is visible to the medicine-man but not to others. Sometimes when the spirit is hidden away by the evil spirits or is terrified and is hiding somewhere, a whole day may pass by before it is captured.

The people of the house prepare to meet the party. They place a pair of coconut shells filled with water on the two projecting ends at the top of the ladder leading to the house. This is to wet the leaves carrying the spirit. As some one pours water over the leaves, the person carrying them says: "That is enough! Now come along ; do not be staying away altogether". Then these leaves are handed over to the medicine-man.

All the people in the house then have a little coconut oil dabbed on their shoulders. After that someone brings burning embers to burn or singe some feathers of a fowl. Following him, the medicine-man goes to the side of the sick man, carrying in his hands all the leaves that have been used. These he places against the wall near the patient. The next day is a day of rest in the house. Nobody moves out, as the evil spirits who have been deprived of a soul recently, would be angry. Nobody makes any noise. On the third night, the medicine-man and other people collect together and sing and dance till midnight. They all wear garlands made of young banana leaves torn into strips. When they have finished dancing and singing, a feast is provided for them. At this time, the leaves on which the spirit of the patient was caught, and which were kept for three days near the patient, are thrown away.

If after the intended object is removed and the lost soul recalled, the patient still does not recover, they resort to 'scare devils'. Figure of men, or of crocodiles, or of fish or of some other objects are made for the purpose of terrifying and driving away the evil spirits. Whilst the medicine-man sets up the figure, the assembled people take a portion of the fowl which has been sacrificed and dip it into a concoction made by mixing the blood of the fowl with crushed leaves and coconut oil, and with this they besmear themselves on the head and chest and they cry out, calling to the sick man's spirit to come back.[31]

CHARMS

In the superstition-ridden societies which believe in the power of magic, incantations and articles said to possess magical properties of good or evil, are made use of in abundance. There are charms for procuring food or good crops, for protection against day-to-day misfortunes and for the prevention and cure of diseases. Here, we will discuss the charms that form part of medicine, but we cannot totally isolate the topic because it forms part of the whole life of the people, and according to the tribal people, there are no boundaries between different activities.

Among the Saoras, a monkey-god, Makrisum, is believed to cause emaciation in children. To cure this condition, the medicine-man makes a toy-monkey out of bee's wax and passes it over the sick child seven times. Then he takes it out of the village to a *Shorea robusta* tree and offers a sacrifice before it. Fever in children is believed to be caused by Edangsum, god of the funeral pyre; in this case, the medicine-man makes a doll of flour and water representing a child, and a little cot with sticks and thread; after waving the doll round the child's head, he puts it in a cot and carries it out of the village and burns it on a simulated funeral pyre; then he digs a hole and buries the ashes and sacrifices a fowl.

Rickets in children is believed to be caused by Tuthumsum; in the case of a rickety child, the medicine-man catches a lizard and ties it by a string round its stomach to a branch of dry wood, and keeps it in the house all night. Before going to sleep, he offers it boiled rice, boiled grain and palm wine. As he makes each offering, he says: 'O Tuthumsum, will you take rice, will you take wine?' and if the lizard opens its mouth, it is taken as a sign of the god's assent. In the morning, the medicine-man takes the child out of the house and waves rice round its head and body, saying: 'For a long time you have taken your share of milk and blood. Today we bid you farewell. After this let the child grow fat again'. Then he removes the lizard from its branch and says: 'You have drunk this child's

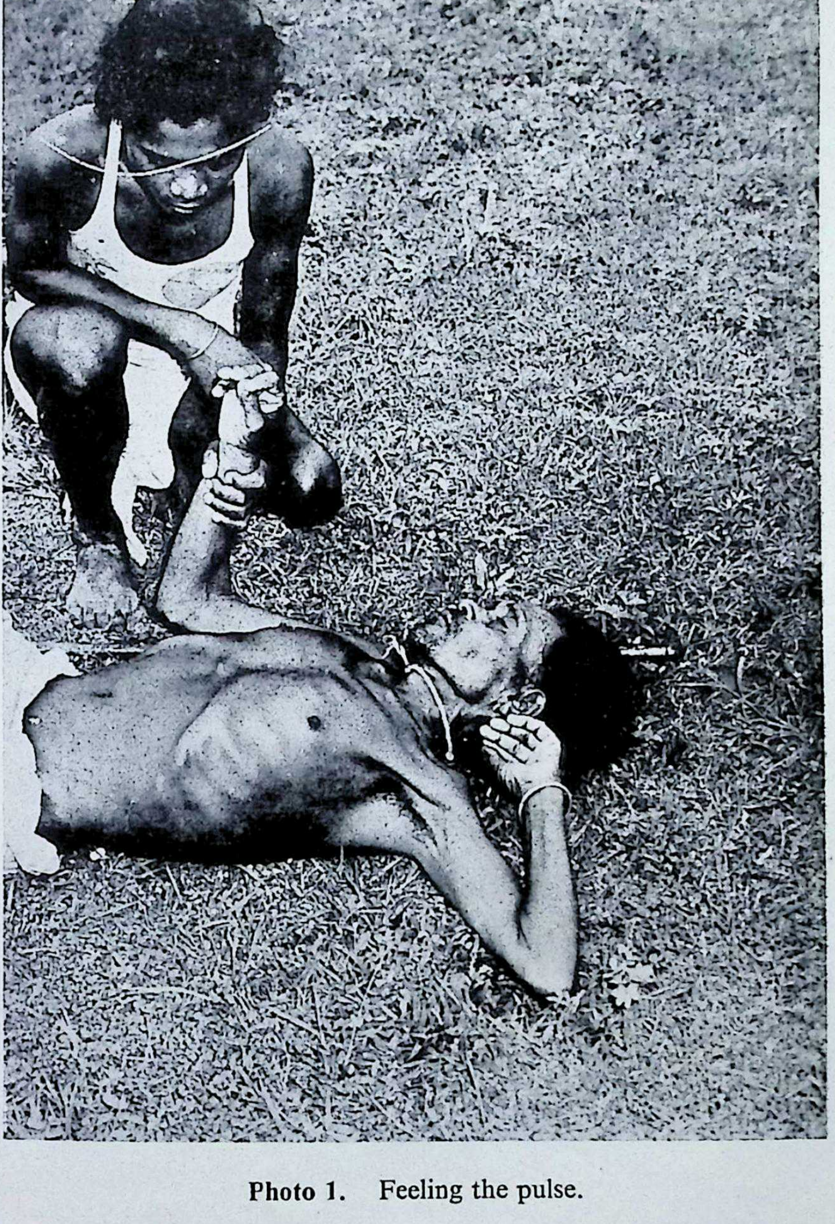

Photo 1. Feeling the pulse.

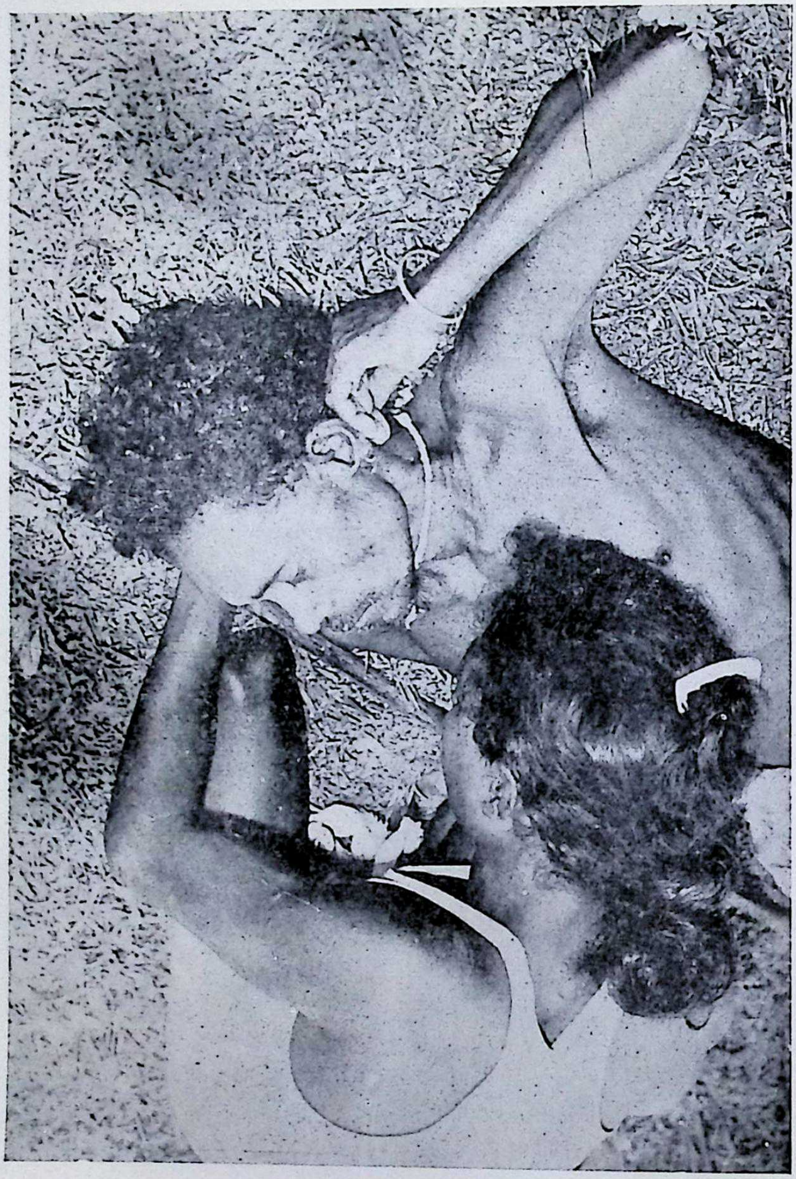

Photo 2. Hearing the heart sounds.

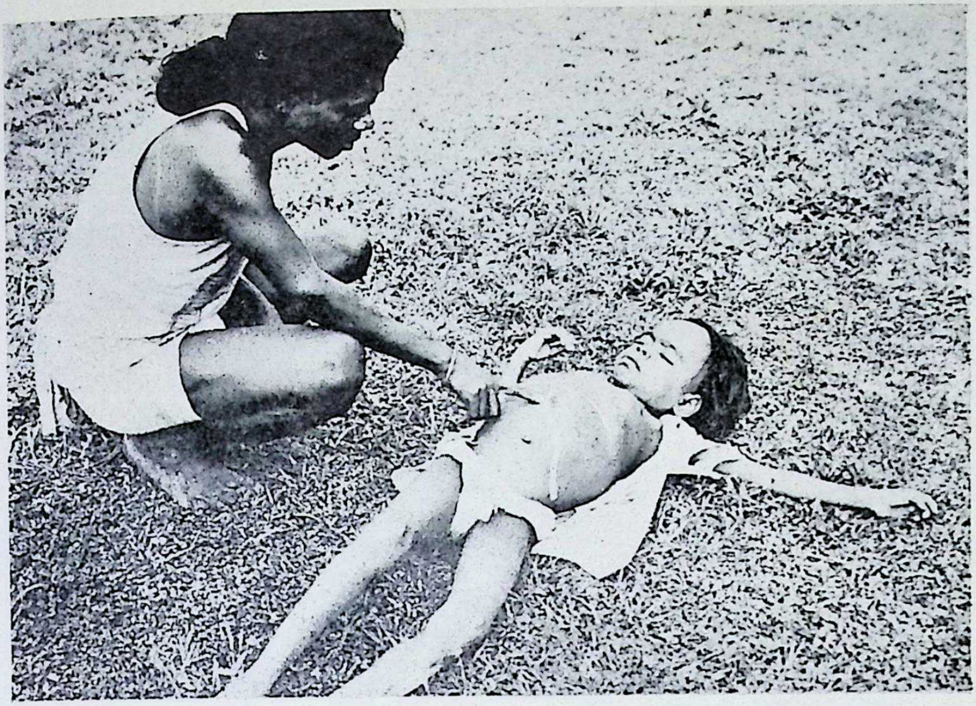

Photo 3. Marking the border of the enlarged spleen by means of one finger only.

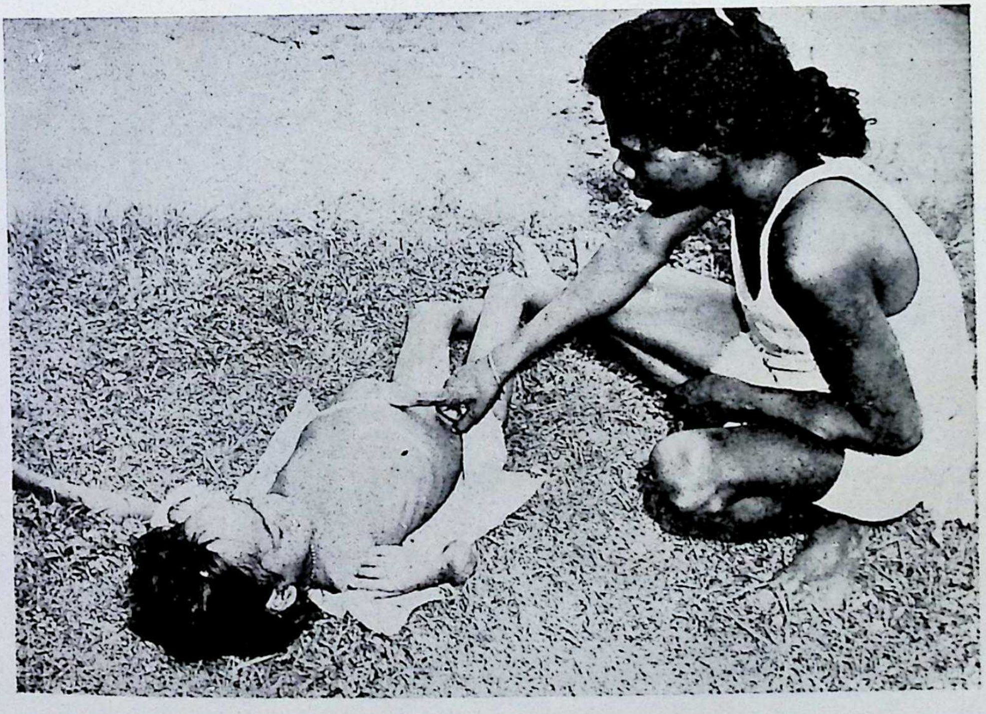

Photo 4. Marking the border of the spleen and liver by means of one finger only.

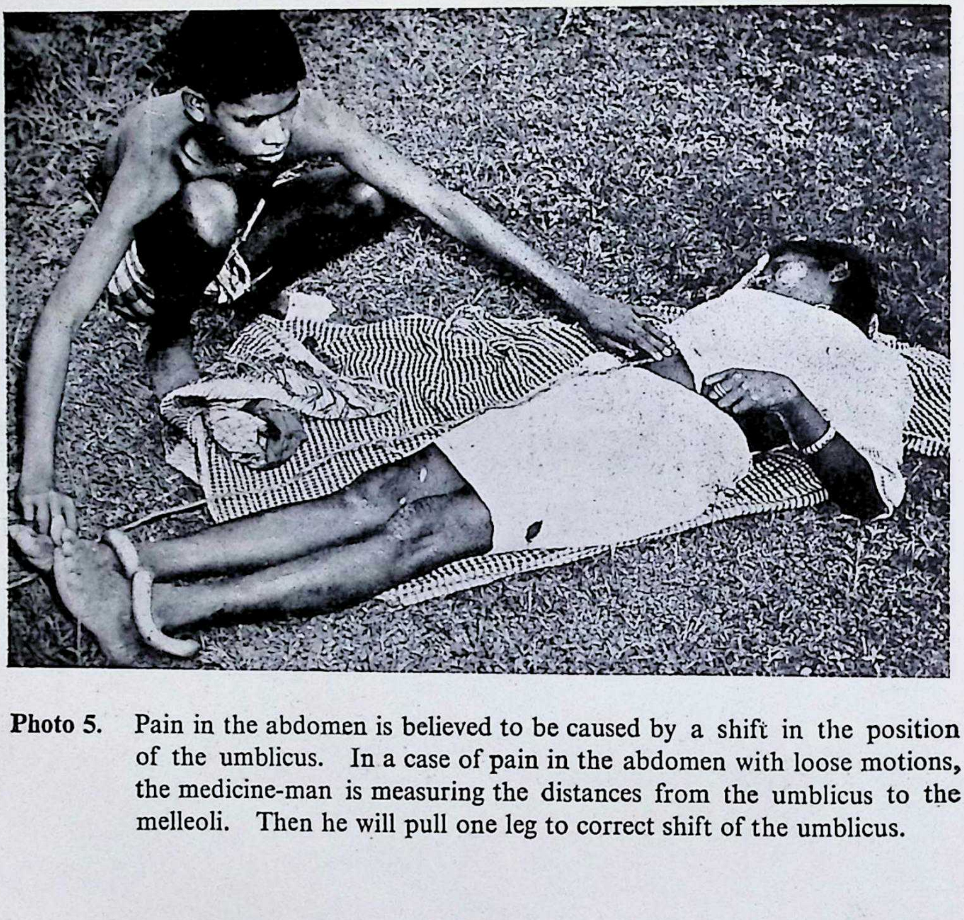

Photo 5. Pain in the abdomen is believed to be caused by a shift in the position of the umblicus. In a case of pain in the abdomen with loose motions, the medicine-man is measuring the distances from the umblicus to the melleoli. Then he will pull one leg to correct shift of the umblicus.

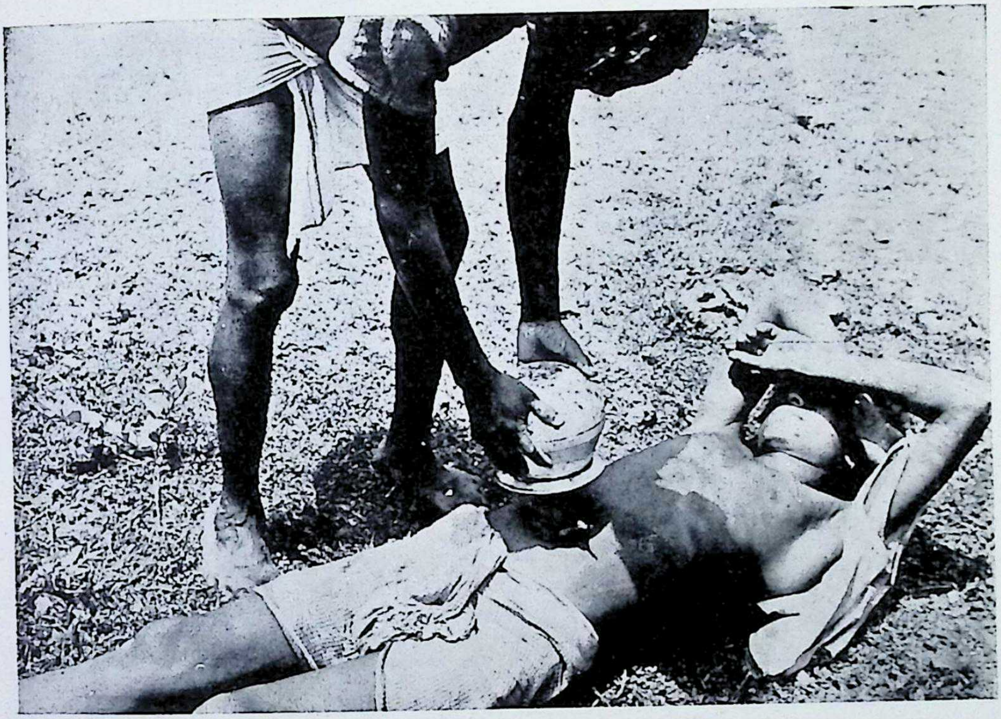

Photo 6. Pain in the abdomen is being treated by placing a lighted *diya* (lamp) over the abdomen and placing an inverted earthen pot over that.

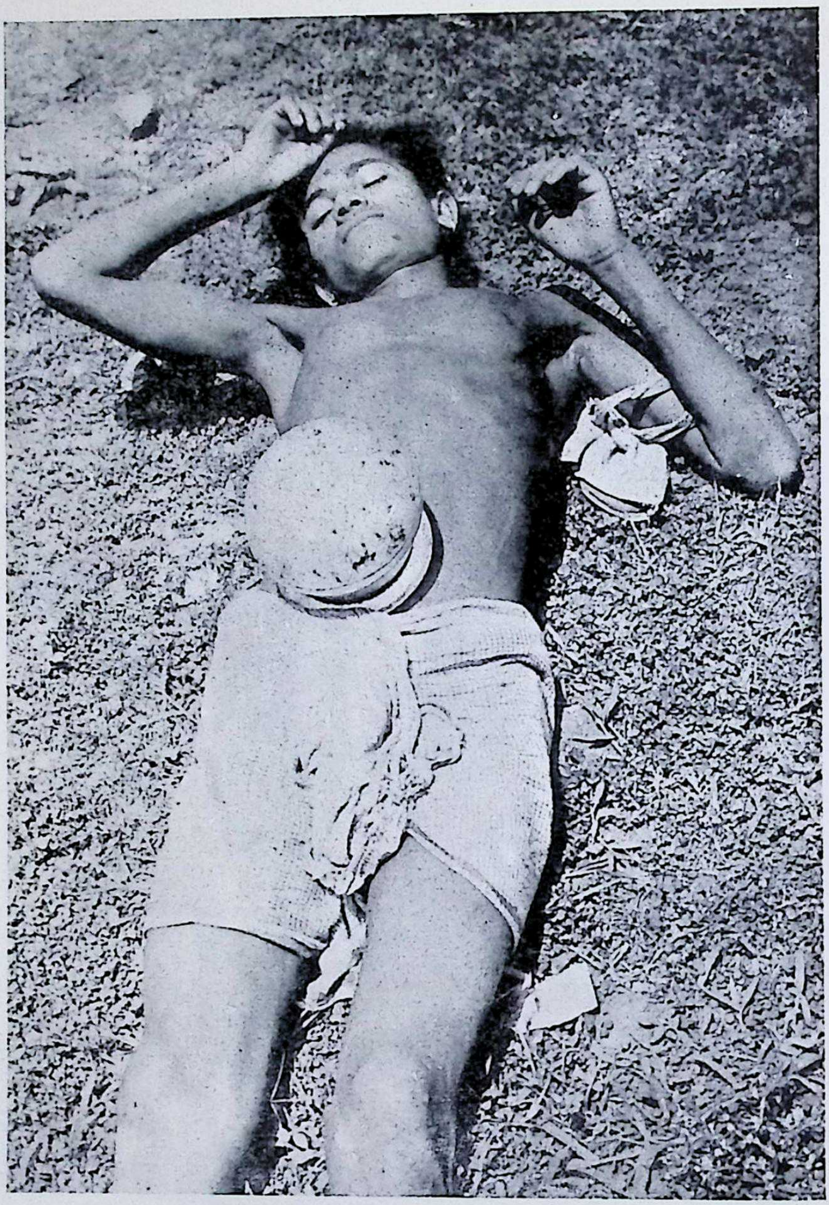

Photo 7. Pot inverted over the lighted *diya* in a case of pain in the abdomen.

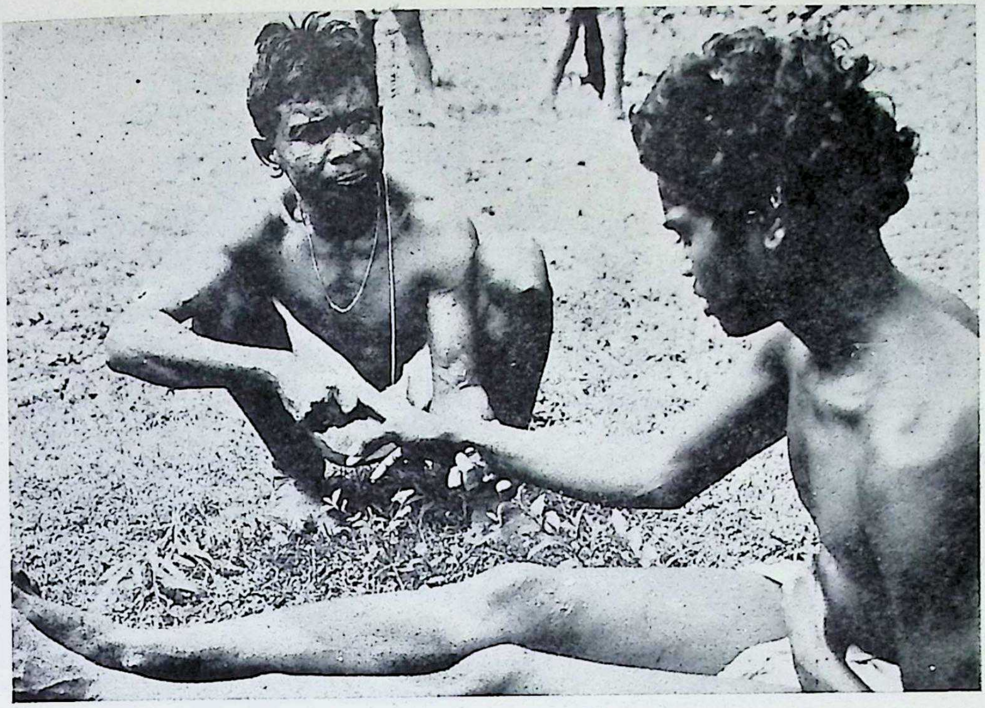

Photo 8. Pain in the abdomen being treated by means of a *mantra*.

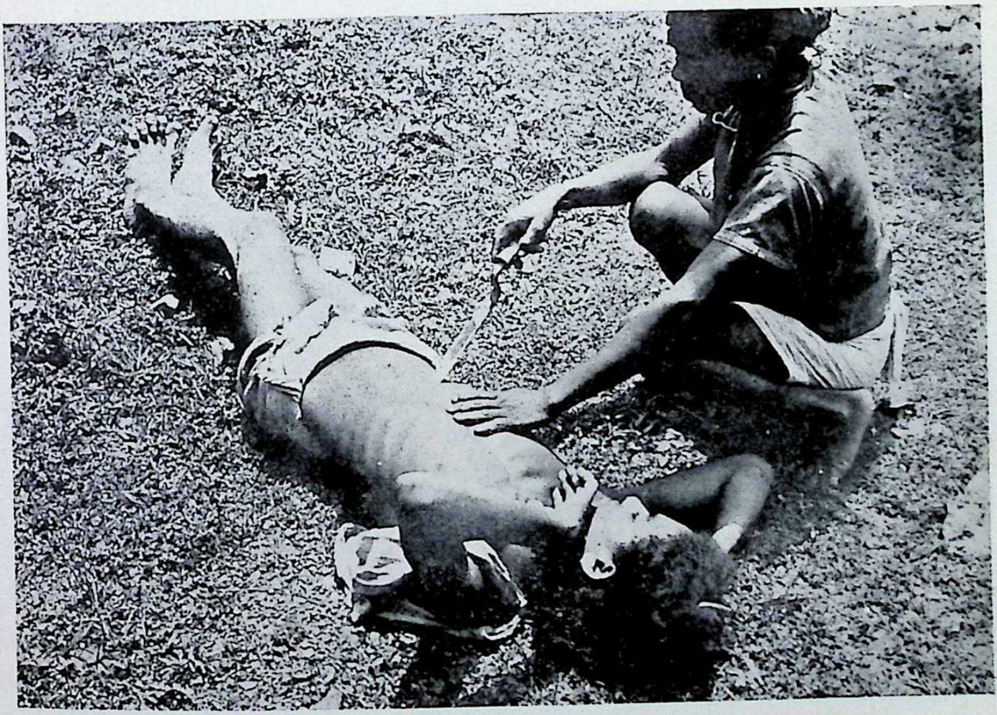

Photo 9. Scorching abdomen with a red hot iron at different places. This method is used for treating pain in the abdomen, ascites and the enlarged spleen.

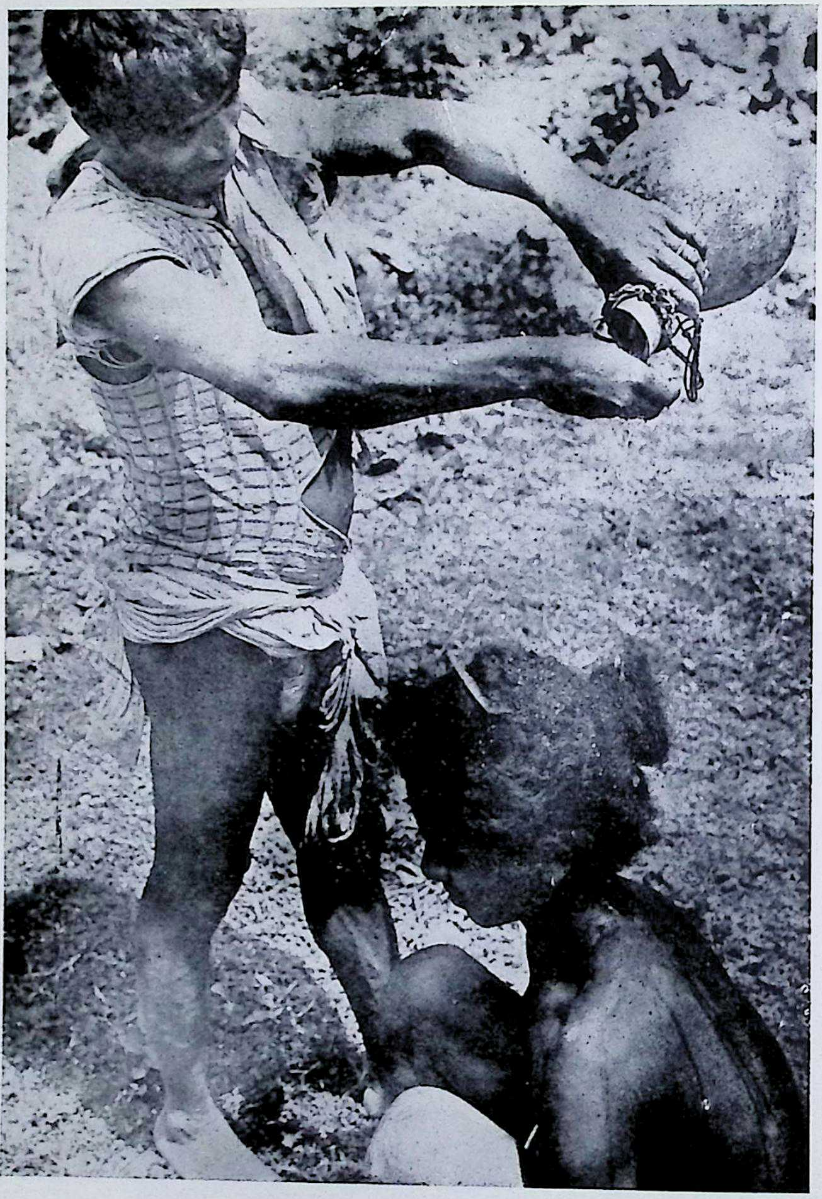

Photo 10. A case of jaundice being treated by pouring over him a decoction made from different herbs ; a *mantra* is being enchanted at the same time.

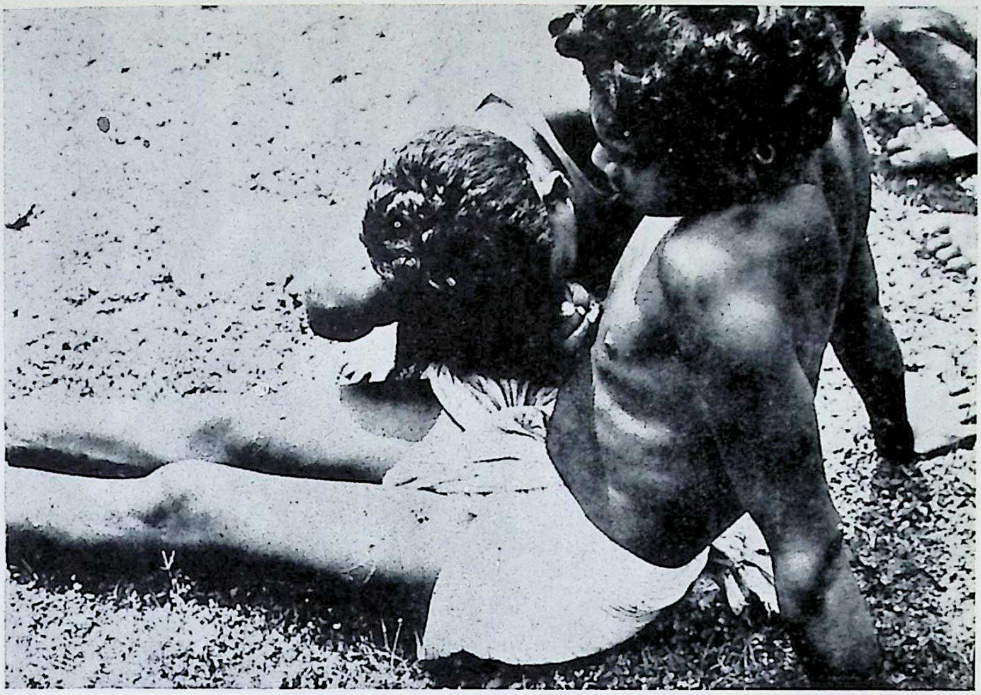

Photo 11. Pain in the chest being treated by a *mantra*.

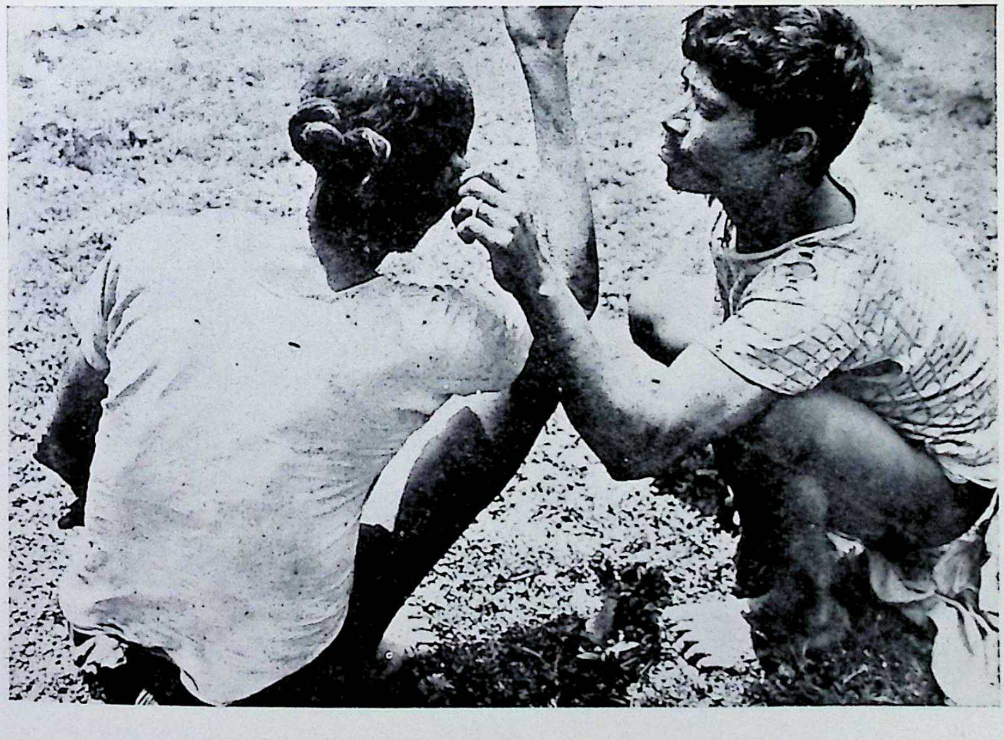

Photo 12. Fever being treated by means of a *mantra*.

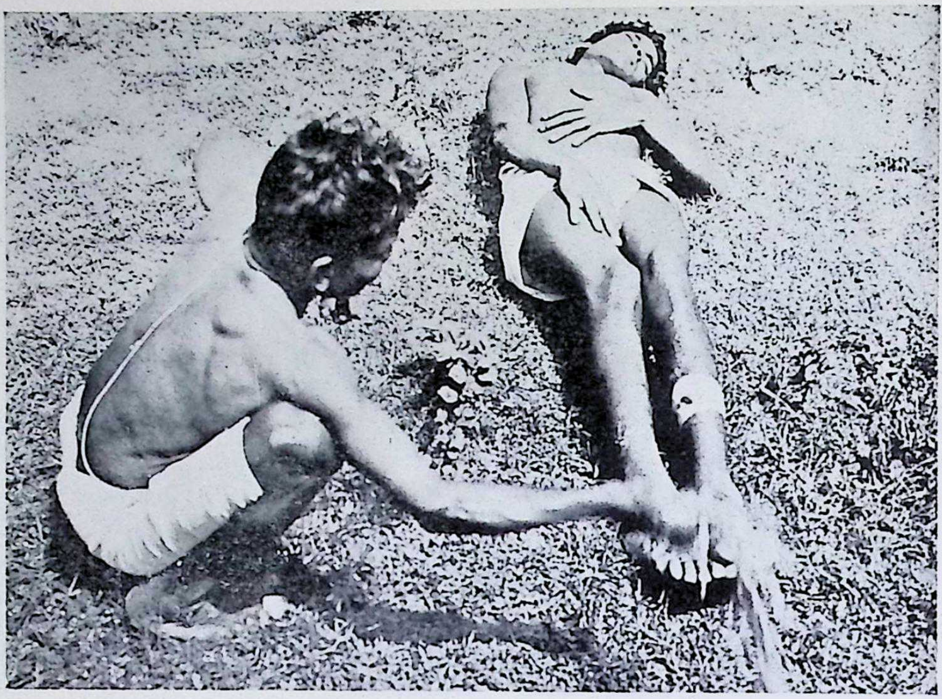

Photo 13. Fit of unconsciousness being treated by means of a *mantra*.

Photo 14. Reduction of a fracture and application of a paste made from the bulb of a plant called *Har sanghar*.

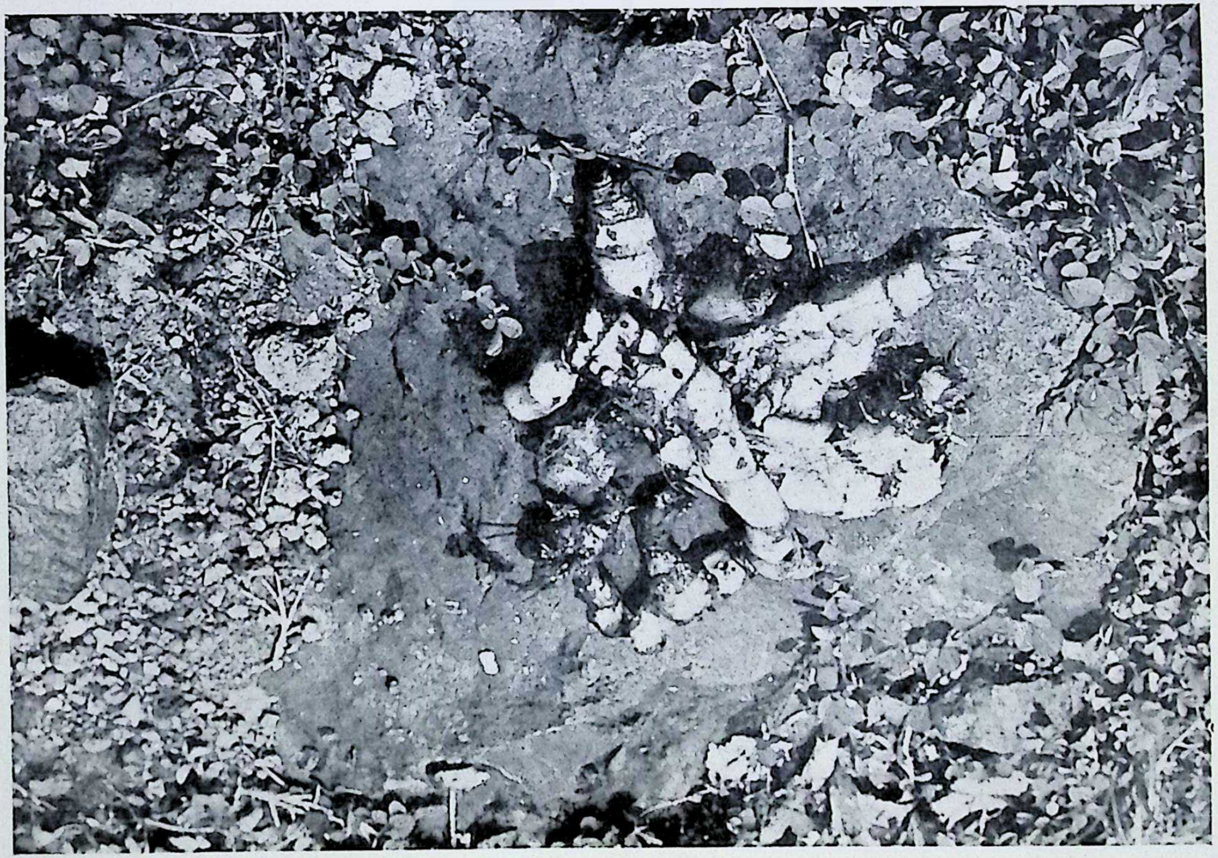

Photo 15. Bulb of the plant *Har sanghar*. This is crushed and applied over the fractured bone.

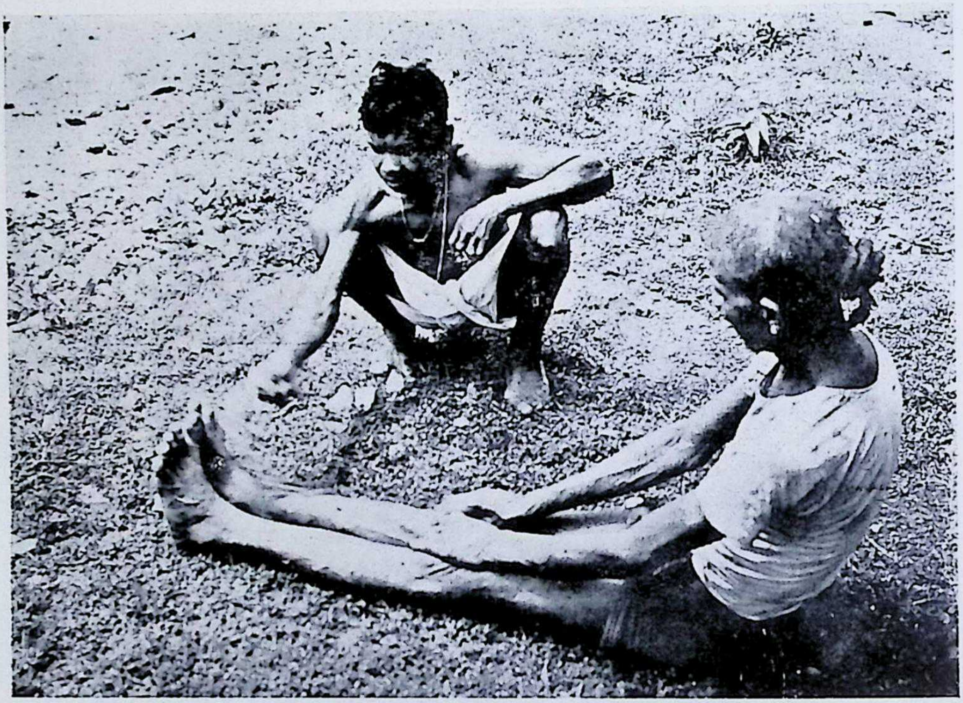

Photo 16. Snake-bite being treated by means of a mantra. After this is done, the root of the plant called *Baihar Kanda* is crushed, mixed with water and given to the patient to drink.

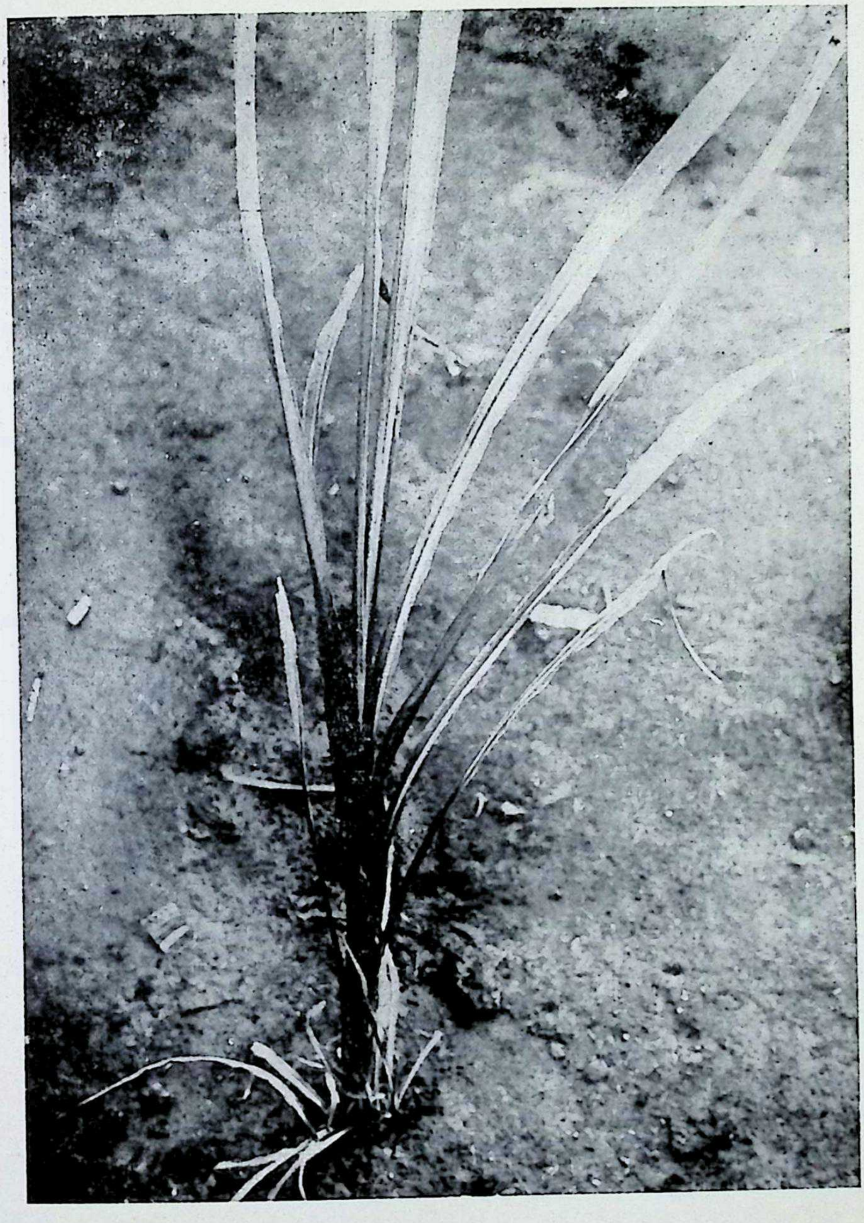

Photo 17. The plant *Baihar Kanda*.

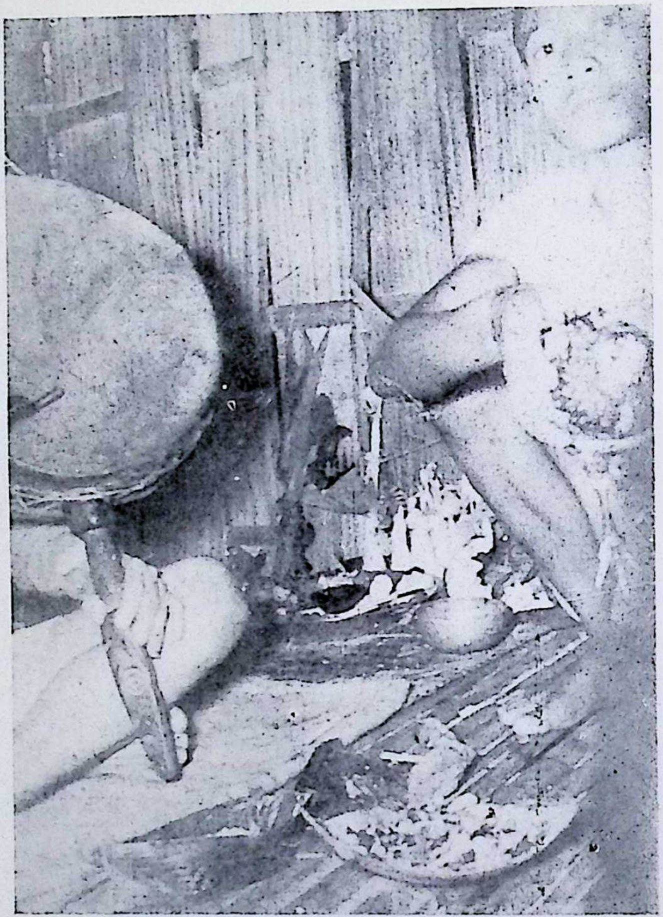

Photo 18. A fowl is being offered to the deity in order to take away the evil spirit causing sickness.

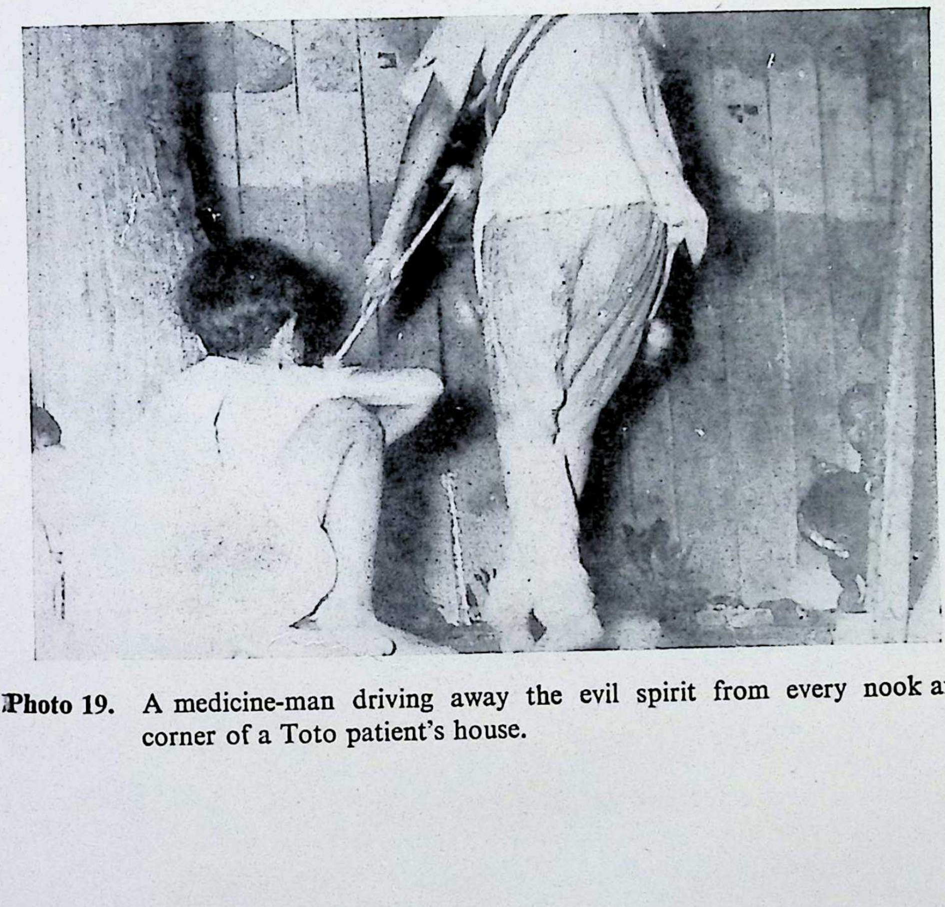

Photo 19. A medicine-man driving away the evil spirit from every nook and corner of a Toto patient's house.

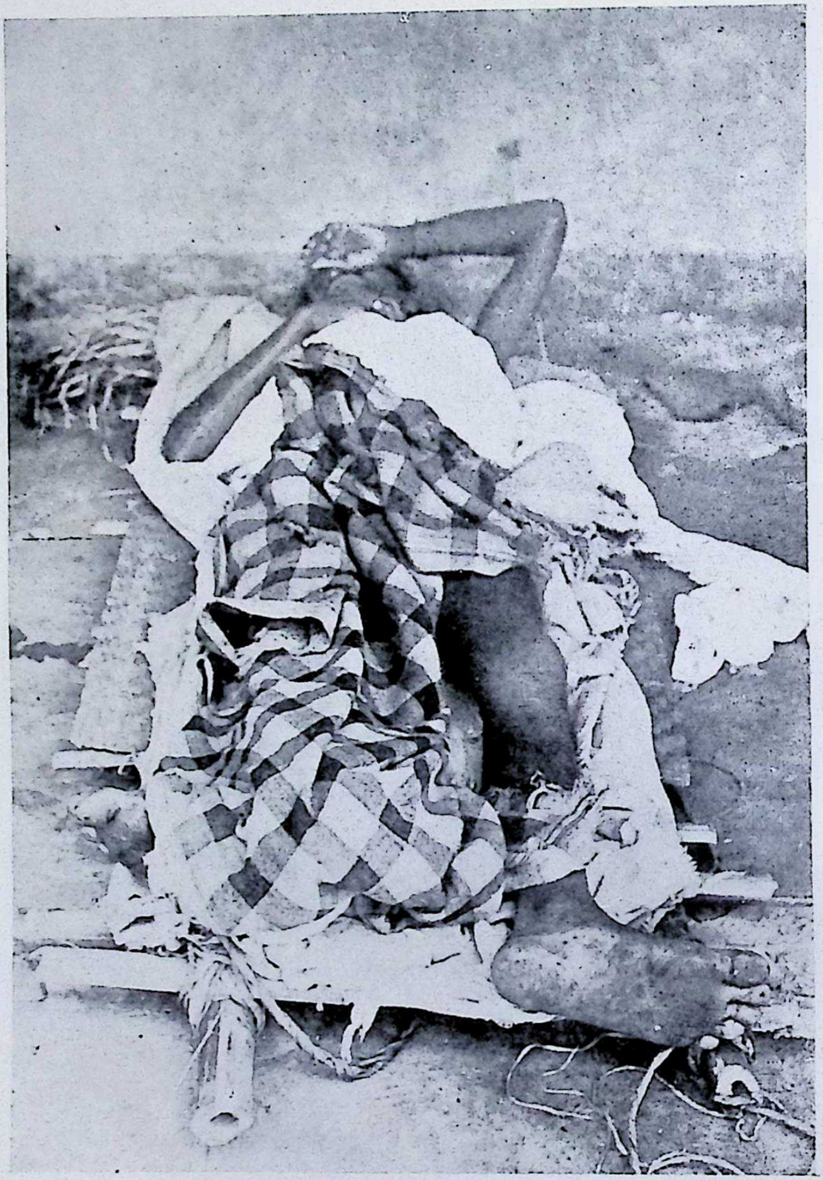

Photo 20. Indigenous stretcher to carry the patients.

blood. You have made it thin and ugly as yourself. Now take your own likeness back. Let there be more blood, more flesh in the child's body. From today give us no more trouble.'

The lizard is then tied to the branch again and wine is offered to it. The medicine-man takes some wine himself and gives a few drops to the child. Then he carries the lizard and its branch, together with everything used in the sacrifice, away to the fields or woods and looses the lizard from its branch but still with the string attached to its body. If the lizard runs away, it indicates good prognosis. This lizard should not be injured or killed, otherwise there is a risk that whatever happens to it will also happen to the child.[32]

If a child suddenly starts crying during the night, the Balahis believe that the spirit of the roof-beam has frightened the baby. The father gets up, rubs *kuku* on the roof-beam and door-post, then scrapes off the dust from the same spots and cuts off a few chips of wood. The whole is roasted in the smoke of a dung-cake burning on a pottery piece taken off the roof of the house. The chips of wood and the dust from the beam are wrapped into a rag and tied with a string around the neck of the frightened child.

If a person has fever and medicines are of no avail, a relative of the Balahi patient goes to the village shop and buys a coconut, *kuku*, vermilion, incense sticks etc. Then he proceeds to a place outside the village where *gokhru* bushes grow in abundance. He stops before a bush and applies *kuku* to its stem at a spot near the root. He breaks the coconut and offers the articles he has brought with him to the spirit of the bush. After the offering, he digs out a root of the bush, and cuts off a piece of it which he takes home. In the house, the women make a fire. The man pours sweet oil into the flames. Then he ties a string twisted out of a white and a red thread round the root he had brought in. Holding the ends of the thread, he gently swings the root over the fire till it is well roasted. Then he ties it round the right ankle of the patient.

In another charm for fever, the Balahis take a thread from the weaving loom and soak it in warm oil and then tie it round the right ankle of the patient. The weavers among the Balahis believe in the curative power of their loom. When the fever comes down but the patient is still weak, his relatives cut a lock of hair from an old woman, plait it into a tress about six inches long, tie a *kauri* shell to it and wind it around the right ankle of the patient.

In a case of daily or tertiary fever (malaria), on an auspicious day of the week, the Balahis catch a *kesari* bug and pour rice grains and *kuku* on it. Then they wrap the bug into a piece of black cloth. Then they roast the bug in the smoke of the burning oil and this is tied around the ankle of the sick person. Now the patient must get up, leave the house and break a thorn from a dry thorn bush and throw it away observing complete silence all along. The bag containing the bug is kept on the ankle of the sick person till the string breaks and the bug falls off or the *barwa* is called to tear the string and take off the bug.[33]

The Saora god, Kinnalosum, is believed to live in streams, and when a person drinks water from there, it passes down his throat and causes pain in his abdomen. The cure for this condition is as follows: the patient must catch two crabs and harness them to a little wooden plough which the medicine-man takes down to the stream and drives along as if he were ploughing. One of the crabs he lets go and the other he cooks. This cooked crab, alongwith a little rice, he puts on the head, chest and abdomen of the patient.

If some one has dropsy, it is the god Pung-pung-dasum who has caused it. The medicine-man fills a new pot with water, ties the mouth with a leaf, and takes it to a running stream. There he sacrifices a fowl or pig before it, and then smashes the pot with a stone, thus allowing the water to escape. For Pung-pung-dasum fills a man's belly with water and it cannot get out, but when this is done, it can.

If a Saora has a headache, the medicine-man takes the patient to the *tangsir* tree, and makes him sit beneath it. He then ties a piece of cloth round his head, throws rice at the tree, removes the cloth and ties it to a branch. He sacrifices a fowl, puts a little of the blood on his patient's head, buries the fowl's head at the foot of the tree, and goes away saying, 'You gave this man a headache. Now, leave him; from today you and I are friends.'[34]

To cure stomach-ache, the Balahis tie a thread around the big toes of the patient. Sometimes the thread is replaced by a silver ring, or an iron ring to provide a permanent preventive charm against stomach-ache.

Among the Sansis of Punjab, aches and pains are treated by charmers (*mandaris*). Enchanted ashes are rubbed on the affected part of the body or enchanted water or other edibles are given to the patient. Enchanted threads are tied round the leg, neck, arm or waist, as a cure for aches and pains.

Among the Balahis, there are *burwas* who claim to have the power of providing relief from pain resulting from the sting of a scorpion. Repeating his *mantras* several times, the *barwa* passes his palm lightly over the arm or leg of the patient, driving the poison away from the heart towards the wound. The *burwa* is believed to take away all pain in a few minutes.

In the South, some of the tribal people throw lumps of molasses into water-tanks in the belief that as the lump dissolves so would the boils pestering a person.

The custom of waving things which are regarded as charms over persons pestered by spirits is common. The technical name for the process is *arti.* Among Muslims there is the rite of *tasadduk* in which a person takes upon himself the calamity impending over an other. It is told of the emperor Babar, that when his son Humayun was dangerously sick, he walked thrice round him, took his illness upon himself, and from that time lost his health. On the same principle, at Hindu and Muslim weddings, old women crack their fingers and touch their foreheads, thus taking upon themselves the danger which menaces the bride and bridegroom.

A favourite mode of using charms is to write the formula on paper or on the inside of a cup, and then to dissolve the writing in water, which is administered to the patient. For the same purpose, charms are often engraved inside metal cups which are reserved for this special purpose. Medical prescriptions, which are really charms, given by the lamas are eaten by the northern Buddhists, who also drink the water in which the magical writing has been reflected.

Performance of charms (*toonas*) at a crossing, is a common custom among tribal people, villagers and even in the city among low castes. It is not an uncommon sight to find a pottery piece, cooked rice, coloured thread and a few other things placed at a crossing. The belief behind *toonas* is transference of the disease from the patient to another man, animal or thing which eats or touches the *toona*.

In order that the *toona* may be successful, the performer must be in a state of personal purity. He must exercise extreme care in reciting the charm over the *toona* ; in case an error is made, there is great likelihood that it will recoil upon himself.

AMULETS

An amulet is a material object worn or carried on the person, or preserved in some other way, for magico-religious reasons : to cure disease, to give strength, luck, or general protection of the possessor, or to defend him or her from specified dangers or misfortunes.[35]

A majority of the children among the tribals and villagers are seen to wear them around their necks, arms or loins; some of them have upto half a dozen amulets, each one for a particular purpose. Men and women wear them on their persons in the form of necklaces, girdles, bracelets, or anklets, and attached to these as pendants. They are also attached to the domesticated animals to protect them against evil spirits or the evil eye.

The material of which the amulets are made depends upon different factors, one among which is the availability of some particular material in the area. Some of the natural and artificial objects used generally as amulets are as follows : stones especially those of a curious shape or naturally perforated, curious vegetable growths, roots, leaves, seeds, nuts, horns, teeth, claws, and other parts of animals and insects, shells, human hair and teeth and relics of the dead; medicinal substances, substances believed to have been extracted from the sick in magical cures ; iron, gold, silver, rock crystal, alum, salt, coral ; strings, threads and rings ; representations of human and animal forms, phallic emblems, representations of eyes, hands, horns and crescents ; beads, written charms, quotations from sacred writings, inscribed objects, medals, coins, obsolete weapons and ornaments ; relics and mementoes of holy persons and places, portions of offerings and dedicated things.

We shall now take up each of these categories of materials used as amulets and see what specific uses they are put to.

Of the various vegetable products used as amulets, are the branches, leaves, fruits, flowers etc. of various sacred trees and plants. These are the fig, mango, *tulasi* or sacred basil, the *bel* (Aegle marmelos), the bamboo, and many others. Rice, wheat, barley and other grains are also used.

Of the various animal products used as amulets, are the claws, teeth, fat, the skin of the tiger or leopard, the five products (*panchagavya*) of the sacred cow—milk, curds, butter, urine, dung, and the extract (*gaulochan*) prepared from her urine ; ivory products, horn of the rhinoceros, hair of the bear, bones of chicken and of the birds of the species *buceros*. Some insects are hung round the children's necks as amulets. Feathers which adorn the head-gear of some of the tribal people are, in fact, protective amulets.

Precious stones, particularly in special combinations, are considered valuable amulets. The collection of nine (*navagraha*)—ruby, pearl, coral, emerald, topaz, diamond, sapphire, amethyst and cat's eye, and of five (*pancharatna*)—gold, amethyst, diamond, emerald and pearl, are considered most efficacious. Jade, possibly under Chinese influence, is used as a charm especially in the Burmo-Tibetan region: it is believed to divert lightning and cure heart palpitation; if poison be poured into a cup made of it, the cup is said to crack. If a man bathes while wearing a turquoise, it is believed in northern India that the water which touches it protects him from boils and snakes. Coral wards off the evil influence of the sun. Similar protective powers are attributed to other precious stones.[36]

The protective value of beads depends partly upon the substance of which they are composed and partly on the perforation which they contain and which exposes them to the entry of spirits. Some of them are made of the 'Rudra-eye' (*rudraksa*), the berry of the plant Eloeocarpus ganitrus, and of the wood of sacred basil (*tulasi*). The shell of the *cowrie* (Cypraea moneta) is similarly hung on the neck of women, children, and cattle, and it is supposed to crack when the 'evil eye' falls on it.

Of the different metals, iron is most commonly used as an amulet or part of an amulet, as its protective value against evil spirits is rated very high. The Vandals of Thana, in order to guard against the spirit which attacks the child on the sixth day after birth (an unconscious recognition of the danger from infantile tetanus, caused by neglect of sanitary precautions), place an iron knife or scythe on the mother's cot, and an iron bickern at the door of the lying-in room—a custom which also prevails in the Punjab. Copper is equally commonly used. In the Punjab, a couple of copper rings or ear-rings are believed to scare the spirit which brings sciatica.

Amulets are also shaped and worn as articles of jewellery. Among many tribal people ornaments take the shape of leaves, flowers, fruits or berries of the sacred trees which were originally used for the purpose of protection; and to these are added the bones, teeth, or horns of animals, the virtues of which are thus communicated to the wearer.

Coins and coin-like objects are used as protectives partly on account of the metal out of which they are made, and partly because of the figures and symbols of deities, or sacred verses engraved on them.

Salt, probably on account of its preservative qualities, is often used in amulets. The Rautias of Bengal repel the 'evil eye' by waving mustard seed and salt about the patient. Salt is a part of one of the elaborate Toda charms.

Yellow, red and black colours are said to be obnoxious to evil spirits. The virtues of black are illustrated by the almost universal custom of smearing the eyelids of women and children with lamp-black, partly because spirits detest black, and partly as a disguise against the 'evil eye'.[37]

Strings, thread and knots are used as amulets to bar the entry of hostile spirits. If a Mala child in Madras grinds its teeth in sleep, a piece of broken pot is brought from a graveyard, fumigated with incense, and tied round the child's neck with a string rubbed with turmeric, or with a piece of gut.

Blood is used as a prophylactic against evil spirits. At animal sacrifices, the blood is sprinkled on the image of a god or goddess ; if the offering be made for the good of the community, it is rubbed on the gates of the town and on those of the chief's palace or hall, and on the fore-heads of the bystanders ; the exorcists and barren women drink cups of the blood, and the person making the offering takes a portion to his house, in which he mixes grains of various kinds and this is scattered in the rooms of the house and laid in a corner of his field.

As regards the shape of the amulets, many of them are box-like things made of copper, iron, or an alloy of different metals, in which are enclosed incantations or figures written on a piece of paper. The figures may be in the shape of a triangle, square, rectangle, pentagon, hexagon, circle or a *swastika*. The written material is supposed to act as protective against the effect of evil spirits or diseases. A curious form of amulet, known as the crown of the co-wife (*saukan mora*) is used in north India. It is an image of his first wife worn by a man who has married a second time. All gifts made to the new wife are first laid before the image of her predecessor, lest, through jealousy, the latter may work mischief. Compound amulets containing a collection of various protectives, are commonly used. The Himalayan Buddhists wear cases containing little idols, charms and written prayers, or the bones, hair or nail parings of a Lama. An amulet worn by a man in the Punjab was found to contain a piece of an umblical cord encased in metal, a tiger's claw, two claws of the great owl turned in opposite directions and fixed in a metal case, a stone probably tourmaline or quartz, and an 'evil-eye' destroyer in the shape of a jasper or black marble bead. These were all considered necessary. But, as additional precaution, were added some gold, a whorelled shell, an old copper coin, ashes from the fire of a *yogi,* ascetic, an iron ring, a *cowrie* shell and the five ingredients out of which incense is made. The owner admitted that the last articles might advantageously have been replaced by a *yantra* or magic copper tablet.[38]

Tatoo marks on the person are also used as a protective against diseases. In Bengal, various types of tatoo are practised as a cure for goitre, and in Madras for muscular pains and other diseases.

Even the secretions of the holy persons are used as amulets. Pills were made from the excrement of the Grand Lama and the spittle of the Meriah victim of the Kondha and of holy men in Gujarat and Madras.

One of the chief sacred substances used in the making of an amulet is ashes. After the recitation of some spells, ashes (*vibhuti*) are smeared on the forehead of the patient three times, and then rubbed off. The Mikirs of Assam use ashes as a cure to relieve blindness. The Todas, in order to avert the influence of demons, make a mark with ashes above the nose of the patient. The ashes of the sacred fires maintained at various religious places have a high repute as prophylactics.

Among the Baigas, the *bach,* a jungle herb, is worn round the neck tightly wrapped into a little bundle, with a bit of cloth, to stop fever. For preventing cough, some smoke-black from the kitchen roof is mixed with turmeric and tied up with a rag, and put round the neck. Tiny scales (*takri*) made from a gourd, is tied over the door with the idea that when the *churel* (or other spirit) enters the house, its attention is caught by the toy, and it begins to weigh itself in it, and soon forgets all about its original purpose. A round, spiked ball, like a great thistle over the door, the *gohana*, is believed to prevent fever entering through the door. Other herbs tied over the door such as *chula kanta* and *satbela* are believed to prevent arthritis. The bones of an eagle tied round the neck are believed to ward off magic and disease among children. A large wild onion hanging from the roof of the cattle-shed keeps away foot-and-mouth disease. A woman who wishes to suckle her child on a journey can protect it by squeezing out a little milk and spitting on it thrice.[39]

Many of the amulets are worn after due ceremonies. Among Balahis of Nimar, when children are sick they are brought to the medicine-man who feels the pulse (*panchchakrya*) of the sick child and diagnoses the case as *dakni*. In order to cure the child, the *barwa* places the child on its back. He presses his open mouth to the child's stomach and pretends to suck the evil spirit out of the body. He spits out vigorously several times. Then he ties an amulet around the child's neck. This amulet is called *tait* and has the form of a tiny flat square box. It is of silver or tin, and usually contains a piece of root, wrapped in paper, on which a *mantra* is written. On the outside of the cover, the picture of a *deo* is imprinted. These amulets can be bought, together with a red string, in the bazaar. The *barwa* ties five or seven knots into the string while he recites several *mantras*. The *barwa's* fee is a few paisas or a coconut.[40]

If a Balahi child suffers from convulsion, a female magician is consulted. She is called *mata*. The woman makes an offering before a small brass figure, which represents her tutelary god (*bija sani*) and then ties an amulet around the neck of the child. On the cover of the amulet are imprinted the figures of five or seven *matas*. These amulets are believed effective only for about a year; later they must be renewed. However, if the child falls sick before the year is over, the *mata* is again called and she ties another amulet around the child's neck. Sometimes children wear several amulets as a protective against different diseases that might befall them.

The vertebrae of a snake, filed on a string and worn around the neck, is another amulet against all kinds of diseases among the Balahis.

Among the Saoras, amulets are made especially by Saoras who have been to Assam or have come under Hindu influence elsewhere. At the time of an eclipse, a medicine made of little bits of *mog-aireng* wood is tied round the neck of a pregnant woman, who may otherwise have a fit of vomiting or a miscarriage. Amulets are often tied round the necks of children at the Ajorapur, and rings or bracelets are often worn in token of promises made to the ancestors. The flesh of a small black mountain rat called *sambiri-kumbulan* is very efficacious against attacks by spirits ; bits of it may be tied round the neck of any one in danger. Herbs may be mixed and put in a small case made of five different metals and tied to the wrist to ward off black magic.

It is said that if the cord of an amulet breaks off of its own accord, it is a sign that it has done its work and may be thrown away. But it is dangerous to break an amulet deliberately.[41]

MAGIC CURE OF A SNAKE BITE

Among tribal people living in jungles and hilly tracts, snake bite is not an uncommon event. Treatment for this condition among them is mostly magical, coupled with the application of herbal preparations or special types of stones.

Among the Gond and Bhumia, after the snake has bitten a person, it is not killed if it is caught; to kill the snake would be equivalent to killing the patient. A *gunia* is called; he, in turn, calls a *barwa* who alone can get possessed by Thakur deo. A *pirha* (low stool) is placed now in front of the *barwa.* A handful of *kodai* (husked *kodo*) is placed on the stool in a longish pile, and by moving the pile alternately to the right and to the left, figure of a curling snake is made with its mouth and tail skilfully drawn. On the right side of the figure of the snake a pearl necklace is placed, the pearls being arranged in the shape of a spotted snake. The sling at one end of the pearl necklace is opened so as to resemble the mouth of a snake. The necklace is placed in such a position near the figure of the snake made of *kodai* that the mouth of the snake represented by the necklace rests at the tail end of the snake made of *kodai*. Nearby is placed a *gurhni* (roll of cloth or strings which the women put on their head when they carry a load), and upon it a *lota* (pear-shaped brass vessel) filled with water from the spring. On top of the *lota* is put an earthen saucer (*diya*) filled with *ramtila* oil. A cotton wick is inserted in the oil and lighted. It is believed that Thakur Deo takes abode in the *lota* and the light.

Now the *gunia* initiates the *hum* sacrifice inviting Thakur Deo to possess the *barwa* He brings fire in a smouldering dung cake and places it before the *lota*. He pours gum of the *sarai* tree (rar) on the fire, reciting, as he does so, a prayer to Thakur Deo, the text of which remains his secret.

After this *hum* sacrifice is over, a man takes the pearl necklace at the tail end and waves it slowly from head to foot over the body of the patient ; then along the ground to the wooden stool and around the snake formed by the pile of *kodai*. After this he puts the necklace back in its place. This ceremony has the purpose of drawing the poison from the patient back into the snake, which is represented by the *kodai* figure. This is repeated several times while the *gunia* sings another prayer inviting Thakur Deo to come and cure the patient. The song runs as follows:

> Whose cow grazing has again returned, whose cow grazing in the jungle?
> Brahma's cow grazing again returned, Thakur Deo's cow in the jungle.
> Blood sucking Masan of the Bhurbhuri hill, take away the cow tied up.
> Again run, run, and cry for help, my Thakur Deo.
> Cow, bring down, bring down my Thàkur Deo.
> Sit down, Thakur Deo, stir up my cream.
> Who keeps you tied up, my Thakur Deo ?
> Where did you get lost, my Thakur Deo ?
> Has a witch tied you up, my Thakur Deo ?
> Has a *gunia* tied you up, my great Thakur Deo.

The prayer song is repeated till the *barwa*, at last, begins to shiver and tremble and to roll his head from one side to another. This is a sign that Thakur Deo is taking possession of him.

The *barwa* is now asked by the *gunia*, whether the patient will recover. If the replies that he sees light, it means the patient will recover ; if on the other hand, he says it is all dark, it means that the patient will not survive.

If the offending snake is not caught and if it is not known which snake bit him, the name of the snake must be found out by divination to bring about a cure. It is done by the *gunia's* recitation of the following song :

> The sky rocks, the cloud shakes, and the island of the earth
> Exorcise, exorcise, king *Burha Nang*
> Then exorcise, exorcise, my *Dudh Nang*
> Exorcise, exorcise, king *Basuk Nang*
> Then exorcise, exorcise, my cobra
> Then exorcise, exorcise, my wheat-coloured snake
> Then exorcise, exorcise, my coal black snake,
> Then exorcise, exorcise, my Adhesar snake
> Then exorcise, exorcise, my Parauon snake.

This song goes on interminably until the snake which bit the man is named. This happens when the *barwa* is jerked by convulsions.

The belief prevails that the snake bite is not just an accident ; the snake had been sent by some evil spirit or god. Hence it is important to find out the spirit behind it and how it will be appeased, otherwise it may be difficult for the patient to recover. This also the *gunia* finds out. For this purpose, he now intones the following song, the refrain of which is taken up by the others.

> Hus *husari husari*, beat the grain pestle, what god has smitten him ?
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, *Bara deo* has smitten him.
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, my *Thakur deo* has smitten him.
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, my *Narayan deo* has smitten him
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, the fields Chhahura deo has smitten him.
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, Alauha Purbya has smitten him.
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, *Rat mai* has smitten him.
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, the god of Darkness has smitten him.
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, the sooth-sayer's god has smitten him,
> Mother, beat the grain pestle, the god of witch has smitten him,
> Mother, beat the grain pestle,

It is believed that as soon as the singers pronounce the name of the god responsible for the accident, the *barwa* is convulsed. Now in order to find out how the offended deity can be placated, divination is resorted to : with the reeds of *chirra* grass taken from a broom. If the reeds appear longer at the second measurement, the *gunia* holds out hope for the patient's recovery. But if the reeds appear shorter than at the first measurement, he shakes his head and announces that the patient is going to die. However, his verdict is not final. The divination is repeated several times to exclude any mistake or to find out whether the spirit responsible for the accident has changed its mind.[42]

Among the Balahis, when a case of snake-bite occurs, the patient is brought before the shrine of Hanuman and covered with *neem* (Azidirachta indica) leaves. Then an offering of the usual ingredients like *kuku*, *vermilion*, incense sticks, etc. is made. Reciting verses, the *barwa* passes his palms over the arms and legs of the patient down to the finger tips and toes. Then massaging the patient's limbs, he pretends to drive the poison slowly down to the fingers and toes, and by the spell of his powerful verses (*mantras)*, removes the poison completely from the body. During this exorcism he is in a trance.[43]

Among the Baiga, a number of men gather round the victim and begin their incantations (*mantra*). As they do this, the rhythm of the music affects the more sensitive among them and Nag Deo climbs on one of the *burwas*, who falls to the ground with convulsions. Soon he gets up, goes to the victim, sucks blood and poison from the wound and spits it out into a pot of milk. Then he throws himself on the ground and counts very quickly, "One, two, three..." upto twenty and cries "*Hak pare Daugan guru ke jag chet samhar* (This is the bidding of Daugan Guru, Arise ! Attend ! Beware !); then he jumps up and sucks the blood again, repeating the whole thing three or four times. While he is thus engaged, the onlookers sing with increased vigour and play on the drums.[44]

Even after the magic cure is applied, some of the patients are known to die. Among the survivors are a large number of those who were bitten by snakes of a non-poisonous kind. Many people still believe that even the most poisonous snake bite can be cured by magic.

'EVIL EYE'

The most popular charm against the evil eye is lamp black *(kajal)*, which is smeared around the eyes of a child. This lamp black is prepared in the following way : a small earthen pot (*diya*) is filled with *till* oil. A cotton wick is soaked in the oil and lighted. Then a brass plate (*prat*) cleaned with ashes is held over the flame. The soot of the oil lamp blackens the bottom of the plate. A finger is dipped into the soot and the lamp black smeared around the eyes of the child.

But if in spite of the above precaution, a child is exposed to the evil eye, the mother takes dust from the foot-steps of the person who is responsible for having cast an evil eye on it. This dust is roasted over a fire and then thrown away.

Among the Bhils, the *badwa* takes seven cow-dung cakes and waves them round about the patient's head one by one and puts them in a water bowl in which are also kept twigs of *pipal*, *shindro,* and *umro* and loose leaf from a broom. This bowl is then placed under a stone on the outskirts of the village. If on the next day this water turns red, the evil eye is believed to be over. If that does not do him any good, the patient is taken to the *badwa,* who fans him with the leaves of *neem, asadwan* and *shindro*, speaking some magic spells such as the following :

> Wake up, O Jagrai
> O Jagrai, O holy Jagrai !
> Holy Mogi, eternal dawn !
> Dawa Hikan went.
> The shackles of misery are breaking.
> The disease that eats
> Now should leave
> And throw the misery chains
> In the deep, deep sea.[45]

Among the Todas, the evil eye is known now by its Tamil name, *konduti* or *kontushti*. One of the commonest effects of this misfortune is indigestion. Anyone suffering from such symptoms suspected to be caused by an evil eye, sends for the *utkoren* (or *utpol*) who rubs the belly of the patient, holds one corner of his cloak in his left hand and putting some salt on the cloak, strokes the salt with a thorn of some plant. The thorn and some of the salt are then put into the fire and the *utpol* utters some incantations

The Toda '*utkoran*' also practises 'absent-treatment'. When he is unable to visit his patient, he puts the salt on the ground and strikes it with the thorn of some plant, repeating some incantation as he strikes. He then sends the salt to the sick man, by whom it is eaten. The treatment is repeated thrice.[46]

EMPIRICAL MEDICINE

While some of the tribes in India believe that all the illnesses—even accidents—are caused by the evil spirits, there are others, in a larger number, who discriminate between natural diseases such as cough, cold, minor wounds, skin diseases, malaria, filaria, venereal diseases etc. which everybody gets and which need no explanation, and those that are caused by the agencies of evil spirits, witchcraft and other superhuman factors. It is particularly for these 'natural diseases' and also as a part of the second category of diseases, that physical agents and procedures are used by them. These include herbs and their preparations and animal products. Physical measures such as massage and cautery are also well known to them.

Such measures are rational in so far as our experience tells, but then, with the tribal people these measures are intricately mixed up with magico-religious medicine, as it was in the Atharvavedic medicine. The tribal people have gathered knowledge about the efficacy of different herbal preparations empirically and this knowledge has been gradually enlarged in the process of passing from one generation to the next. A folk-tale of Santhals illustrates how such knowledge was generally gathered.

Once upon a time, there lived three Santhal brothers, the eldest of whom was married. One day, the brothers caught some fish and asked the wife of the eldest to prepare curry and take it to their fields where they would be working. The woman killed the fish, fried them and made a curry. Then she put the curry in three leaf-cups and placed the whole lot on a big bowl and proceeded towards the field at about 10 a.m. Suddenly the sky became overcast and it began to rain heavily. The woman took shelter under a tree, but rain drops from the tree began to fall on the leaf-cups containing the fish curry.

After the sky had cleared, the woman started again and reached the field. The brothers hastened to their meal. But as she served out the food with the fish curry, she found live fish jumping in the leaf cups! The brothers were now angry. Why should she bring them live fish when they had particularly asked her to cook them ? The woman protested that she had cooked the fish. But there were the fish, alive before the very eyes of the hungry men. The eldest beat his wife. She fainted and lay on the ground, dead.

The brothers now took the body on their shoulders and proceeded home. As they were going, again the sky darkened and it began to rain. And it so happened that they took shelter under the same tree under which the woman had taken shelter earlier. Rain drops began to fall on the body and the astonished brothers saw that very slowly the body showed signs of life. The brothers were struck with wonder and they asked the woman if she could explain it. All that the puzzled woman could say was that she had taken shelter under the same tree when she was going to the field with their lunch basket.

When the brothers looked up they saw that it was a parasitical plant (*banda*) from which the rain drops were falling. They concluded that having come in contact with this plant, the water acquired miraculous curing powers. The eldest brought down the *banda* from the tree so as to test its healing powers. He killed a fowl and sprinkled on it some water in which the *banda* plant had been dipped. The fowl came back to life! Now he was totally convinced about its medical value. He started healing sick people with its help and people flocked to the eldest brother, now a renowned healer.

It so happened that the queen of the country had her finger cut while gathering edible leaves (*saug*). There was profuse bleeding and she fainted. Many *ojhas* were summoned but none could cure her. At last, the king declared that he would give half his kingdom to the man who could cure his queen. Soon he heard that there was a man in his kingdom who could bring the dead back to life. He sent for the famous *ojha*, who administered the strange medicine and the queen was fully cured. The king was extremely pleased and gave him half his kingdom.[47]

The above Santhal folk tale illustrates how through such and similar experiences, the tribal people learn the efficacy of different herbs present in their environment.

Just as modern medicine has several prescriptions for the same disease, depending upon the stage of the disease or suitability of a drug in a particular patient, so have the Baigas also. They have several prescriptions for diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, itch, diarrhoea, impotence, cough, injuries, fevers, aches and pains.

Syphilis : (1) Take roots of *ban semar* (Galactia tenuiflora), *hasiyadaphar* (Baliospermum axillare). Grind these up together and make the powder into pills with *gur*. Give one every morning for twenty-one days. (2) Take fruit of *bel* (Aegle marmelos), bark of *dudhia* (Holarrhena antidysenterica), seeds of *ghol* (Portulaca oleracea), some black pepper. Dry, grind and mix together. Put in milk and drink. This is an excellent remedy for the gummata. For a permanent cure, there are : (3) Gum of *dikamali* (Gardenia lucida) put on the wounds. (4) Root of *indravan* (Coccinia indica) cut up and made into pills with *gur*. (5) Root of *kachnar* (Bauhinia purpurea), black pepper, the tongue of a tiger. Dry, grind and make twenty-five pills with *gur*, to be taken twice a day. (6) Root of *akol* (Alangium lamarcku), black pepper. Grind, strain, drink in water twice a day for a week. (7) Bark of *anjan lokaria*

(Tephrosia purpurea), black pepper. Dry, grind very fine, mix with water and strain. Drink twice a day for a week.

Gonorrhoea : (1) Soak the rhizome of *kurkoti* (Pachystoma senile) for a night in water. Add sugar and black pepper. (2) Take root of *bhawarsal* (Hymenodictyon excelsum), ripe fruit of *dhan-baker* (Cassia fistula). Crush them together, mix the juice with water. (3) Take root of *ramdatan* (Smilax macrosphylla), seeds of *lalphatta* (Panicum crus-galli). Grind together, boil in water. Cool and drink for three days. (4) Grind the seed of *chandrajot* (Jatropha curcas), add sugar and water. Filter through a cloth and drink. For chronic gonorrhoea (*dhat*, *parni*) there are the following prescriptions : (5) Bark of *dudhia* (Holarrhena antidysenterica), root of *khamer* (Ginelina arborea). Grind and give to drink in milk. (6) Take bark of *behera* (Terminalia belerica), *tendu* (Diospyros melanoxylon), a little plant called *muhmundi* (Thespesia lampas) that grows in swamps. Mix, dry, grind and make pills the size of a *tikli* with *gur*. (7) When there is restriction to passing urine (*patthari*), the stone in the head of a *saur* fish is grinded and given in water for five days.

Diarrhoea : (1) Take bark of *saj* (Terminalia tomentosa), tinsa (Ongeinia dalbergiodes), *karar* (Bauhinia purpurea). Pound up together with water. Let it stand all day. Drink in the evening. (2) Take *kadadhari* plant (Eleusine aegyptiaca ?). Grind it, mix with buttermilk and drink. (3) Chew the bark of *karikorai* (Holarrhena antidysenterica). (4) Eat root of *kassi* (Bridelia retusa). It is very good for stomach-ache.

Fever : (1) Take the leaves of the *gurbel* creeper (Tinospora cordifolia); pound and boil them in water. Bathe the patient in this, and also give a little to drink. When the evil spirit sees the water of *gurbel*, it leaves the sufferer. (2) Take twigs about a hand long from near the trunk of the *bara osai* (Vitex peduncularis ?); pound them up, and boil all night in water, which becomes red. Bathe the patient in this, and give some to drink. (3) Grind up the root of *tikur* (Curcuma angustifolia). Make poultice and apply to head.

Aches and pains : (1) Rub ashes on to the painful place and drink as much liquor as possible. (2) Grind flowers of *mahua* (Bassia latifolia), apply as a poultice, and take some mahua liquor internally. (3) Take roots of the *birhol* (Indigofer pulchella). Pound them up, and apply externally. After a time apply a bit of old coconut.

Impotence: (1) Give tuber of black *musri* (Curculigo Orchioides) to eat on an empty stomach. (2) Eat the liver of a sparrow, or other small bird, daily. (3) Take fruit of *aonla* (Emblica officinalis). Grind it up and make a poultice for application to the eyes.

Cough : (1) Take the juice of *harra* fruit (Terminalia chebula). (2) Take turmeric and chillies in boiling milk.

Headache: (1) Take leaves of *amli* (Bauhinia malabarica). Grind, mix in cold water, and apply to forehead. (2) Take leaves of *jhunjhunia* (Phoenix acaulis). Crush the leaves and make a poultice for the head.

Broken Bones: (1) Take the creeper called *harsingri* (Nyctanthes arbortristis) and apply it to the fractured part, tying it on firmly. Also give a little of it to eat. (2) Make some *puri* (flat wheat cakes) and take the bark of *bija* (Pterocarpus morsupium) and tie it on affected part.

Itch : Dig a hole in the ground and put a pot in it. Cover its mouth with a dish which has a hole in the middle. Put some dry gum of the *sarai* (Boswellia serrata) tree on the dish. Cover this again with another dish and place glowing coals upon it. The gum melts and drips slowly into the pot, after which it may be rubbed into the affected parts.[48]

From the above Baiga's clinical pharmacopoeia, we can see that for the diseases which they believe to have a natural cause, they have physical remedies. This applies, as we shall see presently, not only in the case of Baiga, but other tribal people as well.

The Saoras apply a poultice of *putla* (memri) leaves for a headache, or of the tusk of a wild boar powdered and mixed with castor oil for a swollen cheek. For a pain in the chest, *hirwa* pulse is boiled for a long time, and the water is strained off and given to the patient. The sap from various roots and barks is given for dysentery or to stop vomiting. Myrobolans are pounded up and given in water for a cough or tooth-ache; the teeth are rubbed with a twig of Ailanthus excelsa. For ear-ache, a plug of gourd leaves is heated and inserted in the ear. To cure the habit of bed-wetting, the parents burn the hoof of a cow and make the child sniff it. When a woman has an infection of the breast, her husband heats an umbrella rib and pierces the breast to let out the pus; to keep the wound draining, he puts a plug of cord in the hole. For fever in the hot weather, they use a concoction of red ants ; to assist lactation they give raw papaya ; to revive a person after attempted suicide, they give raw eggs ; they use *chiretta* (Justica paniculata) for worms and other intestinal troubles.

More often, the Saoras, like other tribal people, combine empirical treatment with the magical. In a case of epilepsy, the medicine-man sacrifices a buffalo, makes a string of beads of the Canavelia ensiformis and after chanting over it the necessary spells, ties it round the neck of his patient. He then prepares a medicine from the following formula: seed and root of Canavalia ensiformis, root of the Tinospera cordifolia, bark of Dalbergia latifolia, bark of Cipadessa fruticosa, root of an unidentified plant called *samapuri* and mustard ; these he reduces to a powder and asks the patient to take two doses a day before meals for a fortnight. During this period, the patient avoids the flesh of the pea fowl, wild hog and hare. At the end of the fortnight, there is a further ceremony.

Similarly, treatment for a snake-bite also combines several elements. The medicine-man makes a plaster of the roots of certain trees, and applies it to the wound. He makes a potion of the roots of two other trees and makes the patient drink it. Also he extracts the poison with his peacock feather ; he strokes the affected limb towards the extremities and cries on all the snakes by name—'Luanajadan, Bangrubingjadan, Tuneljadan, Bong bong-jadan, Luijarjadan, Garpajadan' to take away their poison and to cure the patient.[49]

Among the Gond and Bhumia of Mandla in Madhya Pradesh the following prescriptions are used: (1) If the body swells up due to a kidney disease, they prepare a medicine of cobra flesh. A piece of flesh of a cobra is boiled and the broth is given to the patient to drink. Whenever Gond or Bhumia kill a cobra, they skin it and roast its flesh over a slow fire till it is entirely dried up. Then they store the flesh for use in the case of kidney trouble.

(2) Against rheumatism, they use a mixture of jackal's fat and flesh of the *asaria* snake. It has to be eaten fried in mustard. Better than jackal's fat is the fat of a tiger.

(3) If a person feels pain in his stomach and cannot digest his food, a piece of the tail of an *asaria* snake (non-poisonous) is cut off and the stomach of the patient is beaten with it. Another remedy against stomach-ache is to burn the belly with a heated sickle.

(4) In the case of a snake-bite, in order to find out whether it was a poisonous snake that bit a person, he is given Indian pepper (chilli), salt and *neem* leaves. If the patient finds their taste sweet, it is considered as a sign of poisoning.

(5) If a person has a headache, he just takes a tress of hair, winds it around the finger and pulls hard. The pain of the pulling makes him forget his headache. The pulling is repeated, and sometimes the hair all over the head is pulled so forcibly that one can hear it crack. Another common cure for headache is to burn the sides of the skull with a heated sickle. It is said that this often brings instant relief.[50]

Among the Balahis of Nimar district in Madhya Pradesh, the most popular remedy is *godha*. Every village has a man who can apply this remedy. When this man is called in, he first tries to find out the most painful spots on the belly of the patient. He presses with his fingers and where it hurts most, he scratches open the skin with a thorn or needle and pours a few drops of the milk of *thuhar* (Euphorbia nerifolia) on the wound. The *thuhar* milk cauterizes, and as the Balahi believes, draws the fever out of the organism of the patient. This remedy is believed to be effective also in cases of rheumatism, gout, and many other painful diseases.

The *godha* treatment is very popular among the Balahis ; few can be found who do not bear the scars of past cures on their bellies. If nobody is at hand to apply *godha*, a piece of iron is heated and the painful spots on the belly are burned till blisters appear. This remedy, the Balahis admit, is very painful, but it is thought to bring relief from fever.

The treatment, however, has its own dangers. The wound often becomes septic in spite of care. Sometimes the infection cannot be checked and eats deeper and deeper into the body till it results in the painful death of the patient.

If it is a simple case of fever, as soon as a Balahi feels that he is getting fever, he drinks plenty of water and lies down. His relatives cover him with all the blankets and spare clothes in the house. Even the face is covered, and one sees only a heap of clothes on the bedstead. This heavy covering produces the intensive perspiration which after a few hours breaks the fever. As soon as the temperature has gone down, the patient crawls out of his bed and basks in the sun.

When a Balahi is bitten by a snake or stung by a scorpion, first-aid is provided by giving a generous dose of country liquor. The root of *merhasingi* (Gymmema sylvestre) is given to be chewed. On the wound, they put a sliced onion which is supposed to neutralize the poison. Aboriginal Gonds know a nut which in many cases gives relief from a scorpion sting. The flat part of the nut is scrapped and then pressed on the wound. The nut sticks to the wound till all the poison is neutralised and the pain subsides when it falls off of its accord. However, the safest way of curing a snake-bite or a scorpion-sting is, in the opinion of the Balahis, to call a *barwa* who stills the pain and removes the poison by magic. There is no Balahi who does not believe that the *barwa* is the best and surest 'healer' of snake-bite and scorpion-sting.[51]

The following are some of the specifics in common use among the Yanadis for different diseases: A twig of *chitramulam*, the milk of which causes blisters, is applied to the forehead, knees or joints to cure long standing pains. *Palatiga* (Cryptolepsis buchanari) creeper is used to cure colds by inserting it in the nostrils. *Baranka* (Strablus asper) is used to cure chest pains. A paste of onions, garlic and ginger would cure fever. Toothache is cured by burning *vakudu* seeds and diverting the smoke into the right ear in case the teeth in the left jaw give trouble and vice-versa. Scorpion stings are cured by *telukonde* leaf and the seeds of the *gaccha* tree rubbed into a paste which is applied to the affected part. *Nagamusti* root takes away a serpent's poison. Aboriginals also burn the bitten spot with red hot coals to suck out the poison ; *Railaku* is used to cure swollen tonsils. Bear bites and other wounds are cured by the leaves of Chloroxylon swictenia. Knife cuts are cured by the juice of *tulasi* leaves, and dysentery by the pills made of *zeerakaya* and garlic. All women in confinement are given, on the day after delivery, a decoction of white *tumma* bark, *margosa* leaves, *nalleru, modaga* bark, white *pulugudu, vempala, tangedu* and *zilledu* roots, and this drink is continued for nine days. This decoction is universally used among all Yanadis as special beneficial effects are attributed to it.

The Yanadis and the Irulas of the south, in all delivery cases, give the patient a decoction of some wild herbs as an effective cure to all antenatal ailments. Irula women do not allow midwives to help them but entrust the job to their own husbands.[52]

Among the Kotas of Nilgiri, an interesting remedy is the use of Bezoar stones, i.e., concretions sometimes found in the gut of ruminants. Bezoars are ground up and fed to improve the mental abilities.

Among the Dankas, when a person is attacked by fever, the illness is generally attributed to a *buffaro* inflicted by an enemy on the patient, and has to be treated by a counter-dose of *buffaro* which means heat in the form of steam, as heat can only be destroyed by heat. The counter-*buffaro* is given in the following way : the patient is laid on the cot on which leaves of the *neem* tree are spread and he is covered with a thick cotton mattress which can retain the steam coming from below. Below the cot a big tub of boiling water is put. The patient lies in this position till the perspiration breaks out on his body ; after a few hours he is allowed to take bath with hot water.[53]

Among the Tharus of Uttar Pradesh, some of the prescriptions used are as follows : For cholera, they extract the juice of onion, mix it with liquor and give it to the patient to drink three times a day.

For fever, they take juice from the tender leaves of a wild *kanja* tree, boil it and take it in the form of a drink.

For pneumonia, they prepare a plaster of opium, eggs of fowls and liquor, heat it and apply it on the patient's stomach.

They tie the seeds of a wild tree *udaslin* round the patient's neck. They powder some seeds and give these in water for a week.

For cough and cold, they drink hot milk with a little turmeric mixed with it.

For paralysis, they tie up the paralysed limb of the patient with seven ropes. They prepare a mixture out of the roots of tobacco, white brinjal and '*ghun ghuchi*' and give it to the patient to drink. The solution is also rubbed over the forehead and all the nails of the patient.

For the eyes, they make a paste out of tender leaves of lemon, orange, mango, and mix alum with it to apply it over the eye-lids.[51]

The above description of the herbs and medicines used by the tribal people for curing or getting relief from some of the diseases is witness to the fact that the tribal people do possess a vast store of knowledge about the use of herbals in various diseases which they believe are caused by physical and natural causes. This, however, does not overshadow the fact that they firmly believe in the super-natural as the cause of many of the diseases that pester them.

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6

The Medicine-Man

While a city physician helps people in getting rid of disease, a medicine-man in tribal society has much more to do. To diagnose and expell the evil spirits causing the disease is only one of his functions ; the others are : to ensure the protection and proper growth of the crops ; to ensure a good catch when his people go fishing, hunting or trapping; to lay the ghost of the dead properly; to protect cattle against the attacks of evil spirits ; to make the course of love run smoothly; to act as a priest when necessary. In fact, the role of a medicine-man in a tribal community is all-pervasive ; apart from being a doctor he has to play the roles of judge, sooth-sayer, magician, fortune-teller, and priest as well.

To act such a role in an efficient manner, there are different customs and traditions among different tribal communities about the training of the medicine-man.

Initiation : He may be compelled by the spirits or gods to become a medicine-man or he may do it on his own initiative. The training may be a prolonged one and under strict rituals and ceremonies, or it be a short shoddy affair. It always needs a teacher to initiate one into it.

In Car Nicobar island, a man is 'summoned' to become a medicine-man and he cannot refuse it. Some one throws into the patient's house two chickens and a few leaves at night. These are believed to be sent by the departed spirit, calling upon the sickman to become either a medicine-man or one of them; the patient prefers the former course.

On a pre-arranged day in the afternoon, a medicine-man and other people collect together holding in their hands a bunch of *to-ki-tiuiny* leaves and thump the floor of the patient's house with heavy coconut leaf stems from below, the house generally being six to eight feet above the ground, resting on posts. All the people now go up into the house and spread several full-sized banana leaves, as well as a quantity of *to-ki-tiuiny* leaves, over the man lying on the floor face upwards. On the ridge of the top-most banana leaf, they stick the wing feathers of a fowl, and then singe or burn the feathers. After some time the leaves are removed, and out of the leaves there come out small lizards. They are believed to have come out of the man's body ; they were the cause of his sickness ; evil spirits had put them there.

Early next morning, his friends come and decorate the one to be initiated. All the person's relatives and friends bring their jewellery and freely loan it to the man for his term as a novice ; it consists mainly of great lengths of silver wire and small coins that have holes drilled in them in order to string them into necklaces etc. The woman put the silver wire in spiral form on the novice's arms and legs encasing them with it or with anklets and armlets of silver or nickel. Spoons and soup ladles are also sometimes tied as ornaments round his waist. Meanwhile, the men make for him a kind of throne, a sceptre and a spear. Thus decorated, he is carried from village to village.

After a few more days, he is taken by the medicine-man into the land of the spirits, which lies in the marshy jungle in the middle of the island. He is introduced to the spirits. Afterwards the medicine-men, the novice and lay folk all go to the house of the novice and after a little rest they again dance *ma-a-fai* dance and sing *ma-a-fai* songs. After that they all partake of the feast that has been prepared.

The *ma-a-fai* dance is held every night, for at least an hour or so, during the whole time of his novitiate, whether there is moonlight or darkness, unless there is mourning in the village, when all dancing is taboo. As the people of their own village become satiated with the dancing, the novice frequently goes to other villages to dance ; and wherever he goes, he is readily supplied with food, and still more liberally supplied with toddy. During his novitiate, he may not do any kind of work ; it is forbidden that he should ever touch a chopper (*dah*). His chief occupations are toddy drinking and dancing.

The *ma-a-fai* always wears the minimum of clothing, apart from the jewellery. He often carries a stick or can which is ornamented with silver coins. This is indeed a kind of badge of office, and is presented to him when he is initiated into the profession. He may remain a *ma-a-fai* as long as he chooses, and then be advanced to the full rank, or if he chooses, he may relinquish his office; there is a special ceremony for the renunciation Some novices become *ma-a-fai* simply because they were afraid for their lives; they often relinquish their office as soon as they feel that they are quite well again. All the silver and other decorations which were loaned to the novice on his admission are returned to their owners when he relinquishes the office, or is promoted as medicine-man. After a man has been admitted a full medicine-man, he may do honest work if he chooses.[1]

Among the Lepchas of Sikkim, the call to become medicine-man (*bong-thing*) is almost similar to that of the Car Nicobar. A person, particularly during an illness, when feels and behaves awkwardly is said to have been possessed by a spirit, and it is considered as a summons from the spirit that he should become a *bong-thing*. All those who receive such a summons from the spirit must answer the summons and go to a teacher who will give them the required initiation and instructions.[2]

The following account describes how a Lepcha got the summons to become a *bong-thing* :

> I was taken very ill, so ill that I could not eat or drink *chi* or move or even go out of the house to relieve myself. I felt as though I was bound with ropes. After another *mun* had recognised the spirit which was possessing me, I recovered quickly and was then able to perform all the rituals of which *padem* are capable. There is no need of a teacher for the work of *padem* ; the spirit will instruct before each ceremony as to what is needed in the way of sacrifices by means of dreams ..

> After I had been a *padem* for many years, I was taken ill again as before, so ill that I lay like one paralysed and all my hair fell out...I lay almost like one dead...
>
> When I lay ill, the *mun* and lampas exorcised unavailingly ; but finally a lama recognised that I was troubled by the *mun god* and he told me that I must make her my private god. The lamas then divined who was the most fitting person to perform the ceremony of *rum keuk* (recognising the god) and decided upon an old female *mun* who lived some way away. She came and a sacrifice was prepared.[3]

And this is how a sacrifice is prepared and conducted :

> In the house a little table is set up. On it to the right lies a scarf of honour with a rupee. In the middle is a wooden vessel which is filled with *chi* and garnished with butter round the rim. On the right is a stone incence-burner filled with Tibetan incense, and dry twigs from the cypress tree. In front of the little table is a winnower on which parts of the animal sacrifices are arranged in the following manner : opposite the vessel is the skull turned towards the table. Behind it are the entrails. To the left of the skull is a hind leg, to the front is a foreleg. Between the foreleg and the entrails is a thigh with a little meat. When everything is arranged, the teacher sits behind the table a little to the left, in front of the scarf. His pupil sits on his right. Then he lays the scarf on the pupil's hand and recites the prayers, which the apprentice repeats after him sentence by sentence. Then the master makes a ceremonial speech to the initiated, in which he explains : "Now the price for the freeing of your body is paid to the demon, but under one condition, that you consecrate your life to the Mun-god, and that you offer up your body as his dwelling place". After his speech he hands the vessel filled with the *chi* to his pupil so that he can drink from it three times from three different places. This drinking of the *chi*, from the vessel garnished with butter, stands for the actual ritual consecration. With this the pupil is bound for three years to study with his master.[4]

After the initiation ceremony, the novitiate generally improves in health. Then he starts training under the instructions of his teacher. He learns all about every evil spirit and the way they are to be appeased and the sacrifices they require; he learns invocations by repeating them again and again. During this period he is forbidden many articles of food. At the end of three years, another ox sacrifice is performed and the student is given *loong*, permission to practice independently.

Similar compulsion to join the profession is witnessed among the Saoras as well. A young man is visited by a tutelary from the other world to marry the latter and to become a medicine-man. But he struggles hard not to accept the suggestions because the profession is exacting and one has to observe tiresome taboos and the income hardly justifies all the labour. The tutelary, however, troubles the young man in different ways and forces him to accept her in marriage which he ultimately does. There are five different types of medicine-men among the Saoras performing different duties according to their graded attainments. The office of medicine-man is not hereditary, but in practice it often runs in families.

While a person is compelled to become a medicine-man among the tribes of Car Nicobar, Lepchas, Saoras and many others, there are other tribes such as Lodhas, Bhils, Malers and many others in which no such compulsion exists. The man takes up the profession on his own initiative. Among the Lodhas of Bengal, on the particular day, the disciple remains on fast and arrives after sunset at his preceptor's place. There the preceptor sits on a burnt wood left after cremation, with his face towards the east. An earthen lamp filled with *kachra* (fruit of Bassia lastifolia) oil is lighted. The preceptor invokes some deities and offers goats in sacrifice in order to gain their favour for transmission of power. The discipline also follows the preceptor's instructions and invokes the deities in the same way. Then he utters several sacred formulae addressing the *veers* or heroes of the past. At that time the disciple shows signs of spirit-possession.

After a few months during which the disciple has been watching the preceptor at his work and following his instructions and is considered to have mastered the art, the teacher tells him the final magic incantation. From that day, the disciple is authorised to start practice independently. The disciple gives the preceptor a feast and a new piece of cloth. All this is done in secret and the disciple is strictly advised not to divulge the proceedings to anybody.[5]

The art of a medicine-man (*devalo*) among Bhils is generally learnt from another practitioner, though in some cases, it is handed down from father to son. After learning the charms and the technique of divining, the pupil accompanies his instructor to the village-burning *ghat* on the last night of the month of Kartik (about October). On this night, the ghosts are believed to return to earth. The *devalo* sits inside a *kar* or magic circle marked upon the ground and converses with the ghosts including *Babrio Jotnig walo*, the King of the Dead. These ghosts may ask him for meat or wine, or bread, and he comes prepared for this, throwing his gifts on the ground well clear of the kar, where he is inviolable. In this ceremony, the teacher introduces his disciple to these spirits and requests them to come to his help when he needs them. The teacher's remuneration is quite handsome.

Among the Malers, a person intending to become medicine-man (*guru*) has to learn the art from the other *guru*. One who wants to receive training, contacts some reputed *guru* of his locality, wins his confidence and thus becomes his trainee. The training period may continue for several years. While a trainee, the person gives occasional gifts of rice, money, pigeon, goat, fowl etc. to his *guru*. The *guru* takes him to the forests and teaches him about the herbs. He takes him along on his professional visits so as to impart practical training.[6]

The above type of training of a medicine-man is the rule amongst most of the tribal societies. Among the Santhals, however, the training is elaborate, going through different grades of proficiency, the whole course lasting for many years.

The course starts on one of the last days of the month of May. The *ojha* takes his class in the courtyard of his house, at a place called *than*, a small mound where he worships his *bongas* or he may take it in a nearby shed. The classes are held in the evening. There is an opening ceremony (*akhra rara*) performed to ensure unhindered running of the course. The *ojha* makes vermilion marks in the name of different *bongas* and others, and invokes the following in the name of their first teacher, Kamru guru: "Here you see, Kamru Guru, I am making a mark for thee; here you see, disciples are sitting; they will come and go at night in darkness, then may malevolence and enmity not come in contact with these disciples; may there be no spell of an evil eye, no sudden fright; in perfect safety may they come and go!"

The actual teaching consists of the following: (1) Invocations (*mantras*) to drive away disease, or the supposed supernatural cause of disease, the *mantras* being different for different diseases. (2) *Jharni*, also different for different diseases and used only in connection with certain complaints. The *jharni* is sung or chanted to a special melody that differs somewhat according to the words; the disciple has to learn the words, the melody and the manner of application. (3) The songs to be used at the *Dasae daran*, the dancing-and-begging wandering, when the course comes to an end. (4) The special dances and play-acting, and how to be possessed (*rum*). (5) Medicines to be used when *mantra* or *jharni* or both are ineffective.

The *guru* makes the *chelas* repeat *mantras* and *jharnis* for two to three months and goes on correcting them. After they have learnt this part, he makes the more proficient disciples offer sacrifices to his own *bongas*, and himself utters an invocation as follows: "Be greeted then, Kamru Guru, I have made the disciples and pupils sit down (to learn); then on their behalf, I am giving you this; may they continue to learn well, and from today they will commence to call you; with pleasure, with enjoyment come; they will dance and play, let no spell or evil charm of any enemy or adversary be thrown or hit. If there is any such, or any magic or evil charm, or the like, you will move all such away; may nothing fall on the disciples." After this the disciples start learning, dance in *Dasae* fashion, and call on the *bongas* and become *rum* (possessed). They also learn the use of one or two stringed instruments.

During the last stage of the training which is imparted to a selected few most qualified for it, the *ojha* takes them along when he goes on professional visits, shows them how to feel the pulse, to understand the different symptoms etc., teaches them to prepare the medicines and where to find them, and all else that is needed to become an *ojha*. The complete course ends by the *ojha* giving *sid* to the qualified candidates. Only those who attend the courses for two to three years are deemed fit to become *ojha* ; the others gather knowledge for their own sake and for some other minor functions.

In the *sid* ceremony, the *chela* and *guru* take their baths and clean a part of the courtyard in the disciple's house and purify it with cow-dung. *Adwa* rice is placed thereon and vermilion marks are made.

Sitting down on the new loin cloth given to him, the *ojha* performs the sacrifices. The *chela* holds the goat, the fowls and the pigeons whilst the *guru* beheads them. The head of the goat is cooked with rice ; the brain is made into cakes. The *ojha* then utters the following invocation: "Beware then, though so and so (*bonga*), so and so (disciple) is learning; I am giving thee in his charge, receive by his hand; I am handing thee to him; somewhere or other he will do *ojha* work ; when he some day or other makes a mark for thee and he names thee, then if the patient gets well, thou wilt receive sacrificial animals; if he does not recover, thou wilt receive nothing". At this time the *guru* tells his *chela* the names of the different *bongas* to be invoked. The ceremony is open to all and all the villagers and the headman of the village are invited to share the rice and meat. Towards the end of the ceremony, the *guru* and *chela* are covered by a cloth. The *guru* asks the *chela* to snatch away from him the part of the brain cake that he is eating himself and to eat it himself. If the *chela* is not able to do this, the *ojha* predicts that he will not be able to take up the work like his master. The *sid* ceremony now ends and the collected gathering celebrate it with beer.[7]

Mode of Practice : The word *ojha* used among many tribal communities is a Hindi word derived from the Sanskrit word 'upadhyay', a teacher. *Ojha* connotes a diviner, a sooth-sayer, sorcerer, wizard, enchanter, conjurer, exorcist, magician—all in one. He cures by charms, incantations, exorcisms, herbal and mechanical devices. An *ojha* – call him by any name—is a must in all tribal communities. Sometimes there are other practitioners of the healing art as well.

Among the Santhals, there are two types of medical practitioners, the *ojha* and a herbal-man. A Santhal *ojha* consults the deity or divines by leaves and oil, makes disease gather at one point of the body and gets the evil out by biting and sucking, removes or drives away the *bongas* and administers medicine as well. The medicine-man feels the pulse, prescribes and prepares medicines for his patients but does not indulge in the supernatural. The people prefer the *ojha* to a herbal-man, because they want the benefit of a more comprehensive treatment. Some of the herbal-men are forced to change over from their profession to that of an *ojha* to have a wider clientele.

Among the Balahis also, there are two types of medical practitioners : the *barwas* and the *jankas*, but the difference among them is of another type. The *barwa* claims to be possessed by a *bhut* on whose authority he acts and who speaks through him, while a *janka* only uses some natural devices, as the finger pulling, to find out the sickness and its cure. It is believed that as the *barwa* makes an alliance with a *bhut* who tells him the secrets of the other world, in return for his service, the *bhut* demands a solemn sacrifice from the *barwa*, every year at Dasahara. If the *barwa* omits this sacrifice, the *bhut* will certainly kill him. The *barwas* are popular among the people.[8]

Among the Gond and Bhumia too, there are two types of medical practitioners : the *panda* and the *gunia*, like the *barwa* and *janka* of the Balahis. The *panda* is believed to possess superhuman powers through the assistance rendered to him by some superhuman force ; the *gunia* is supposed to have superhuman knowledge which he acquires in each particular case by various methods and devices. The *gunia* never falls in a trance. His task is to diagnose a case, to play an intermediary between man and the superhuman powers by revealing to his clients what exactly these invisible powers demand from them.[9]

Among the Tharus, it is the *barara* who helps them in their sickness. They believe that the *mantras* enchanted by the *barara* during many rites and rituals for bringing about definite results, have a supernatural sanction behind them and it is this that is responsible for their mystic potency. But repetition of a *mantra* is the main thing which imparts efficacy to magic, though the mode of delivery, communion with the spirits and the physical and mental condition of the *barara* is also necessary to bring about the desired effect. For instance, the *barara* must observe a fast when he is employed in performing an important ritual, such as, in controlling epidemics of cholera and smallpox and in making periodical offerings and sacrifices to the village deities, gods and goddesses. He must avoid sex relations while fasting and must take a bath before performing the rites. These taboos must be observed in order to give potency and effectiveness to the spells. The *mantras* have to be read in one breath without any break. The *bararas* believe that if their *mantras* or any of their magical devices are put in black and white they will lose all their efficacy and power.

Among the Saoras, there are five different grades of medicine-men ; some of them are not qualified enough to go into a trance, while the others do and get possessed by the spirits which help them by telling them the diagnosis in a particular patient and what remedial sacrifices to perform. There are even women medical practitioners among the Saoras.

To be capable of going into a trance is considered as a higher qualification among the Saoras. The medicine-man utters some invocations and then squats on his heels before the altar or ikon, makes offerings of rice and wine, and calls on the spirits to attend. When he feels that they are on the way, he changes his posture, sitting upright on the ground with his legs stretched out straight in front of him. He takes a winnowing fan containing rice in his left hand and lights a little lamp which he waves above the rice and places by the altar. Then he begins to rub his right hand round and round in the rice, calling as he does so on his tutelary to come upon him. He continues doing this for as long as perhaps five minutes, and his voice grows fainter until suddenly he gives a start, his whole body stiffens, his arms extend straight before him and his hands clench themselves tightly. His attendants at once catch hold of his arms and legs and bend them and unclench his fingers; this sometimes involves a regular struggle to break down the rigor. After this, he sits with his head bent, legs straightforward, his arms stretched along them. And then all at once he begins to speak in a high pitched unfamiliar voice; this is the voice of the spirit who has come upon him.

The medicine-men starts on an empty stomach; from his first invocation he begins to take sips of wine, which is supposed to go to the spirits. After he has passed into a trance, he drinks constantly, perhaps for several hours, as spirit after spirit demands refreshment. The effect of gradually increasing intoxication is visible in his talk and attitude. To begin with, he is timid and humble before the spirits, gradually this mood vanishes; he becomes daring and demanding. Where he previously grovelled, declaring his willingness to eat the excreta and drink the urine of the gods, he now commands and threatens. He weeps, laughs, jokes, curses. At one moment he is a woman and pretends to give suck to a child, he puts anything given him on his head as a woman does; in the next he is an old man, wears a big hat and hobbles round driving imaginary herds before him with a stick. A little later he is a tutelary's horse and demands water and drinks it with great noisy gulps. A bawdy ghost comes upon him, and he demands a woman, catches hold of one and makes a token attempt at intercourse. As an old man he coughs and spits; as an old woman he sheds tears, pats his shrunken breasts and combs his hair. In such a state of trance, he is a spectacle and there is no dearth of people that collect around him. And there is nearly always a hot discussion, the congregation remonstrating, pleading, arguing; the spirit complaining, abusing, threatening at first, then gradually softening in the face of promise and persuasion. He gets possessed by not one but many spirits one after the other.

Normally a medicine-man's own tutelary comes upon him first, and after that a succession of gods and spirits. The sign that one is going and another coming is witnessed from the fact that his voice falters and dies away ; his body jerks convulsively and his hands slide down his legs to his feet. There is a pause and then he begins to speak in a different voice. When everything is over, he relaxes ; he spits into his hands, rubs them together, rubs them over his face, yawns, stretches himself, he is like someone waking up. He spends the rest of his day in sleep. When he wakes up, he usually remembers nothing of what has happened.

A competent Saora in trance impresses one with his extraordinary qualities. He has not only to have a good grasp of his subject but also a considerable knowledge of local geography, history and economics ; he must be acquainted with the circumstances and genealogies of every family in his area, and he must also be well aware of village gossip. In the state of dissociation, all his varied knowledge and experience comes to the fore and is expressed in a dramatic performance which often has a genuine healing effect.

The Saora medicine-man needs the help of rhythmic music to fall into a trance. The *kuranrajan*, the hide-gong and the fiddle provide this. The rhythmic dance also helps in this direction.[10]

SOCIAL STANDING

The medicine-man's social standing is different in different societies. In some, as for example, among Saoras, he or she is a very respectable member who is supposed to protect the community against the misdeeds of the ancestral spirits.[11]

The Kuranbois, the female medical practitioner among the Saoras, gets even more respect from her patients. She works as a house-wife ; she works in the fields, and also looks after the health of her clients; she is always overworked. But then she gets better food and clothing than even her husband because she is frequently asked to perform sacrifices and takes the good food offered on the occasions.[12]

In some other tribal communities, the medicine-man is ridiculed when not in need ; and even when needed, his services are accepted but he is not respected. Among the Bhils, a *devalo* is generally respected if he is needed, not otherwise. If his services are not needed, people make fun of him and his methods of divination. They even cut jokes on him saying that while he may be strong in magic, he has no phallic potency left because of that. A *devalo* has to live a disciplined life ; he has to observe fasts and for six days in a week he is expected to have no sexual intercourse.

Lhawas do not occupy a prominent place in Sherpa society, for unlike lamas, whose power is due to learning and spiritual achievements, the *lhawas* are only the channels through which the spirits and deities manifest themselves to men.

In Car Nicobar, there is a considerable amount of scepticism about the professed powers of witch-doctors. Very little attention is paid to them unless their services are required; there is, moreover, a general unwillingness to join the brotherhood.

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Superstitions

Superstitious beliefs abound among the tribals. Among the Balahis, if a married woman does not give birth to a child, there are several procedures available to her to cure the condition. She is often advised by the medicine-man (*barwa*) to put fire to five or seven houses, or hay stacks. The excitement over the fire is believed to make a barren woman capable of conception. This belief prevails in villages in many parts of India and is one of the causes of frequent fires. A safer method is to offer coconuts under a sacred *pipal* tree (Ficus religiosa), or to hang a miniature *palang* (bedstead) in its branches or to place it under the tree. Some barren women try to get hold of a cloth which has been soiled by the menstrual blood of a woman who has children of her own ; they cut out a corner, burn it, and swallow the ashes. This is believed to pass on the fecundity of the other woman over to them. Some women secretly obtain possession of the umblical cord of a new born baby and eat a piece of it. It is believed that while this child (whose umblical cord is eaten) will die, its spirit will be reborn in the barren woman who swallowed its umblical cord.[1]

When a Tharu woman is found out to be sterile, her husband approaches the *barara* to cure her sterility. The *barara* goes to the forest on a Saturday or a Sunday in search of white flowers of *bel* tree, which blossom throughout the year. He ties a piece of cloth with two cloves and a piece of thread to one of the roots of the tree, saying, "I invite you. If you are successful in giving a child, I will offer the sacrifice of a goat to you." He then plucks some flowers and ties them in a white piece of cloth. The barren woman ties it round her neck after taking a bath. In another method the *barara* finds a *jamun* tree in some orchard outside the village and places a white piece of cloth, some cloves and thread at its root on a Saturday ; this being the most auspicious day for this purpose. Then he prays to the tree saying : "I beg of you and invite you to give your blessings to a barren woman. If she conceives and gives birth to a child, I will sacrifice a goat in your honour." Then he climbs up the tree, cuts a piece out of a small tender twig. These twigs are wrapped in a piece of white cloth which she ties round her neck after her bath.[2]

A Koyi woman in Madras sometimes throws a cock down in front of the cloth on which protraits of her ancestors are sewn and makes obeisance to it. Bathing over a corpse is also said to cure the condition.[3]

Tribal people have peculiar beliefs about the conception and development of the foetus. According to the Lepchas of the Himalayas, at the time the two secretions of the father and mother meet, the soul descends from the heavens and a child is conceived. The first part of the foetus to be formed is the eyes and it is around them that the head forms. Within the womb there is something resembling a nipple through which the child draws nourishment ; this nourishment is something like butter, and is the transmuted food of the mother, just as milk is after birth. Consequently the mother is not permanently depleted by child-bearing ; none of her body goes to feed the child. By the end of the fifth month, the foetus has taken the human shape. From this time onwards, the expectant parents must start observing the numerous pre-natal precautions which have to be followed if the child is not to be born malformed, or if the mother is not to have a difficult delivery. The *mun* cleanses (*peks*) both parents with a bunch of elephant grass in one hand and a live fowl in the other. While both the parents are equally capable of influencing the child within the womb yet a greater number of precautions are to be observed by the man. Some of these precautions are as follows : If either of the parents are engaged in making a fence he or she must do the whole work by himself, otherwise the baby cannot be born properly. Neither parent should lock up anything except their arm box or the child cannot see the light of day till the opening of whatever has been locked. Neither parent may eat animals which have met their death by accident or have been killed by a wild beast; the father must not look at recently killed animals; he can kill animals but must run away at once. The father must not touch the iron or rope of a horse's bridle ; should he do so the mother and child are liable to die. This can, however, be prevented if a bridle is kept in the house which can be passed over the woman during delivery. If either parent should be weaving a mat or cloth he or she must never quite finish it but must leave a little bit undone. The mother must not eat any joined fruit such as a double banana or the child's toes will be webbed. Neither parent must stick poles into the ground or tie knots or drive in nails or put small stones into the cracks between bigger stones when building a wall as all of these activities can prevent a proper delivery. Expectant parents must not look at an eclipse, otherwise the child will be born dead. If a child has recently died, the paths it used to walk and its house must be avoided ; and as a general precaution it is better to avoid the paths and houses of all recently dead people. Expectant parents must not watch a dog being born; if they do so the child will have one eye smaller than the other. If expectant parents move a sacred image, the child will be born dumb. Should either parent look at or kill a field mouse or should they eat rice which has stuck to the bottom of the cooking pot, the placenta will not descend.[4]

Many of the tribal people believe that the sex of an unborn child can be predicted. For this, among the Balahis, two persons hold a stem of the *dongri* grass (a dark green kind with a thick stem) at either end. With their finger nails, they make an incision at both ends and then, gripping the ends, they rip the stem asunder while they say: "Bhika [the child's father] *ki stri larka howe to palna; larki howe, to muska*: (If Bhika's wife will get a boy, a cradle ; if a girl, a muzzle). Now if the fissures made at either end of the stem do not meet, the stem resembles a cradle, and consequently it is presumed a boy will be born ; if, however, the blade of grass is cut at both ends in such a way that the stem parts into two halves when the middle is reached, it looks like a muzzle of a bullock, and consequently the birth of a girl is expected. This is done thrice and if all the three times the same result is achieved, the sex of the coming child is surely that which the experiment indicates. If the results are contradictory this must be repeated at some other time.[5]

The Tharus believe that if a pregnant woman drags her left leg first while walking, she will give birth to a boy; if she drags the right one, a girl is expected. Again, if there is some heaviness on the right portion of her belly, a boy is expected, and if on the left, a girl. If she feels extraordinarily bright and cheerful it is a case of a boy, otherwise a girl.[6]

The Cheruman in Madras employ devil-drivers, who seat the woman in front of a tent-like structure with a coconut palm flower in her lap. When cut open, the fruits predict the child's sex, the birth of twins, and the child's expectation of life or death.[7]

There are many superstitions about difficult and delayed labour. In such a case the Baiga make a hole in the roof. A virgin girl brings water from the river, and this is passed from hand to hand along a line of men and thus upto the roof. The woman in labour stands beneath, and three mouthfuls are poured into her mouth. In another method the wood of a tree struck by lightning is set afire and the woman is warmed with it. Or if there is a gun in the village, the medicine-man brings it and washes the barrel with water. This he gives to the woman to drink. If there is no gun, she herself washes the inside of her husband's feet and drinks the water. Furthermore, if from the colour of the nipples, a girl has been diagnosed to be born, the women make a small winnowing fan (*supa*) and put rice in it. They shake this up and down in front of the woman's belly, saying: "Come out, girl, you'll soon be cleaning rice, you will soon be grinding, pounding, fetching water". If a boy is expected, they take a bow and arrow and say: "Come out, boy, you'll soon be out in the jungle shooting green pigeon and every kind of bird."[8]

In the Nicobar islands, in the case of difficult labour, a diligent search is made to make sure that no clothes or other belongings of the parents are shut or boxed up, or contain any knots. The door of the hut and the lids of all boxes are left open. The men lift up an inch or two, the big racing canoes of the village and then put them back in the same place ; and if there are any logs or other heavy things lying about, they lift them up or turn them over. As a precautionary measure in a case of pregnancy, neither the woman nor her husband ever make anything tight, as nailing a board, or tying knots, for fear that the spirit of the unborn infant should get tied up in the knots and cause a difficult delivery in consequence.[9]

The Dankas believe that if the woman presses the abdomen with her two hands in a particular way, the pain will subside and the child will come out easily. Sometimes there is indiscriminate pressing of the abdomen continuously for three or four days by each of the three midwives with the result that the foetus actually dies and the life of the mother is endangered. If the midwife fails in spite of her efforts and the foetus does not appear, she attributes this failure to the evil eye of the brutal goddess and asks the tribal priest to intervene and offerings are made to her.

Difficult labour is dealt with in parts of Madras by calling in a woman who has had an 'easy time'. She presents the patient with betel, etc. and if that fails, a line of persons drawn up, pass water from hand to hand until it reaches the woman who had the 'easy time,' and she gives some of it to the sufferer. Here the luck or quality of the one woman is transmitted to the other.[10]

After the birth of the child among the Naikas of Gujarat, in case it is feared that the child may not survive, it is given as unattractive a name as possible such as Ukardo (dust-bin) or Marghdo (cock), so that the evil spirits are not attracted to it. Sometimes the child is sold, though, of course, repurchased, thus losing all connection with the unlucky family in the process. The new-born child is kept in a bamboo basket and placed before the manure pits as if discarded. The paternal aunt then comes out of the house and shouts with the child in basket "*Lejo koi chhokirun*" "Buy you this child ?" A purchaser is arranged for and the price paid and the infant is taken to a new home. After some time, the mother comes back and returns the price of the child, but during the interval, the intermediate ownership is considered to have removed the evil eye and ensured health and long life for the child.

When the time comes to give a name to the new-born infant, among the Saoras, they tie thorns above the main entrance of a house, so as to discourage the evil spirits from coming in. When the child is one week old, they perform a hair-cutting ceremony. The medicine-man cuts a lock of hair, puts it along with his knife on the altar and offers a pig. He dedicates a pot and then mixes the hair with a little cow-dung and smears it on the wall. This he explains by saying, "We do not throw it away, for if anyone were to piss on it, the baby would get sores on its head. Or if a dog were to walk on it, or sniff at it, the baby's head would be covered with lice." Sometimes they hide hair-clipping in the cracks of stone walls ; it is believed this makes the child strong as a stone. A girl's hair is sometimes thrown away into the branches of a date palm ; this makes her hair grow luxuriantly. If a child has big soft umblical stump, it is believed that Ringeboi the wind, has got into it. The father pokes it gently three or four times with a stick he brings back with him from the fields. Then the mother goes for water, with two pots, one on top of the other, and a gourd on top of both. With the handle of the gourd she too pokes at the stump. This is believed to expel Ringeboi and to lessen the size of the stump.

There are different ways of promoting lactation. The medicine-man makes an offering to any tree whose leaves exude a milky sap in the name of Gadejangboi, and makes a medicine of the root which he then gives to the mother to drink. In another method, he sacrifices a fowl to Uyungboi at sunrise, mixing a little of the blood with water and sprinkling the mother's body with it. A third method that is sometimes tried consists in killing a cock above the breasts of a woman who has inadequate lactation, and allowing the blood to drop over them.[11]

Among the Balahis, when a person gets seriously ill and there is little hope of his recovering, people go to visit him. They squat near the sick bed for a short time, speak to the sick man and tell him that they have come to pay a visit to him in his illness. The Balahis lay great importance on such visits and want to be visited when they are ill ; they feel great consolation when they are pitied by friends and relatives in their hour of suffering. The more visitors there are, the better they feel. They are not anxious to deceive a dying patient with soothing words. Rather, they are frank in discussing his dangerous state of health and express their doubts as to his recovery. The patient himself does not usually mind such frankness. When the end seems near, all the fellow Balahis of the village are called to the house of the dying person. As many as can possibly find place in the house, enter and sit near the death bed The others squat on the verandah or in the courtyard. They talk little, and only in whispers. As death approaches, the nearest relatives of the dying man are asked to lift him from the bed and lay him on the floor. If the last agony of the dying person is protracted, a cow is brought into the room and he is made to hold the tail of the cow. It is believed that the sacred cow will lead the departing soul safely into the other world to the abode of Dharamraj, the judge of the dead.[12]

Almost all the tribal people believe in a life after death in the 'other world' or the 'under-world'. A typical description of the 'under world' according to the Saoras is as follows : The under-world is like this world ; there are hills, rivers, rocks and trees, but it is always moonlight there. There is no brighter light than that ; there is no sun and the clouds are very low. You cannot recognise people at a distance, the light is so dim. The tutelaries are the officials and the ancestors are the peasants of the land. Since there is so little light, the ancestors cannot get about very much. But when they do find a path, they come to this world and cause a lot of trouble. The life of the ancestors in the 'under-world' is not unlike that of the living, but it is dwarfed and frustrated. The dead have one physical abnormality which is specially noticeable—their eyes are in the back of the neck. The ancestors quarrel, murder, commit suicide just as if they were alive. They are great litigants and the courts are always crowded. In case one partner gets old and dies, and reaches the 'under-world' and feels neglected, he comes and calls upon his or her partner to come to the 'under-world'. In such a case the couple will live together as before and they can even have children, though these children do not have the power of visiting the earth.

When a medicine-man dies, the position is complicated by the fact that he already has a spirit wife in the 'under-world'. The tutelary will live with him in the 'under-world', and when the medicine-man's wife dies she is not allowed by the tutelary to live with her husband.[13]

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8

Recent Changes

Tribal people who have not come in contact with urbanization have an absolute faith in their indigenous medicine-men and their indigenous treatment. If they get well, the credit goes to the *ojha* who was powerful enough to drive the angry god. If they don't get well, the *ojha* does not get the discredit, the evil spirit that attacked the patient was too powerful and recalcitrant; the god was too angry; or if the patient had trespassed a taboo, the punishment had to be there. Neither the *ojha* nor the method of treatment comes into disrepute. This is why their belief in folk medicine has never been shaken.

Where the tribal people have come in contact with modern civilisation—which has been quite widespread during the past few decades due to agriculture and industry—they behave differently under different situations which is indicative of the prevailing confusion in their minds. Many of them seem to be sure neither of their own tradition nor of the newly acquired one.

While they make use of modern drugs when they have headaches, colds, flu, etc., during epidemics they still think medical aid will be futile and resort to sacrifices to propitiate the irate gods and goddesses. They still believe that if the disease has been caused by an evil spirit or any supernatural agency, no medical treatment will be effective, unless the influence of the evil spirit is moved by the *ojha*. Even the educated, sometimes, stick to their old belief: "Although I try to avoid the *ojha* because I do not believe in his incantations (*mantras*) yet I cannot do without his help. Whenever I fall ill, the *ojha* is the best man to help me and not the doctor, because the *ojha* can find out which evil spirit has afflicted me."

How a disease should be treated depends upon what is believed to be the cause of the disease. If the tribal people even after exposure to modern civilisation still continue believing in evil spirits, naturally then they will get well only when the cause is removed; the medicines prescribed by a modern medical practitioner cannot provide them with a cure.

While the above observations indicate the effect of deep-rooted beliefs, yet closer and longer lasting contacts with modern culture are making inroads into their old way of life. This is witnessed from the study of Santhals working in Tata Iron and Steel Co. Here the Santhals live either in the houses provided by the company which are fitted with electricity and water taps and provided with better hygienic facilities or they live in surrounding Santhal *bustees*. While the Santhals living in *bustees* have beliefs inclining more toward those that prevail in the villages, those living in company houses have developed beliefs more akin to the beliefs of the other city people and non-Santhal neighbours. The Santhals living in company-provided houses take much more advantage of the hospital and clinic medical services than do the *bustee*-Santhals, though this service is free for both the groups.

Comparison of the prevalence of the disease among *bustee* and village Santhals has shown that the former suffer more from diseases than do the village Santhals. While the *bustee* people believe this to be due to the greater struggle and friction between the people leading to sorcery and witchcraft, in fact this is due to massive overcrowding that prevails in the *bustees*. The interpretation given by the *bustee* Santhals, however, tells us that in order to channelize their thoughts in the right direction, we need to provide them with much more than mere modern medical aid.

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PART TWO

Village Medicine

1

Village Culture

Writing about Indian villages, Charles Metcalfe in 1832, said : "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution...but the village community remains the same. This union of village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."[1]

Independence of one village from others around it, or from the life in towns, cities and the country at large, on the one hand, and absolute dependence on one another of all the people living within a village, on the other hand, has been a characteristic of Indian villages all through history. Within a village, different castes and communities are so integrated in its economic, social and ritual patterns by ties of mutual and reciprocal help and obligations that they don't have to look to outside help or interference.

Members of a village help one another in their day-to-day life as well as on special occasions. Generally, the carpenter makes the peasant's plough, and it is his duty to see that the peasant's agricultural implements are all in good shape. Each family he serves, pays him a fixed amount of paddy or wheat and straw at the harvest time. The washerman similarly washes the clothes of every family in the village except of families belonging to very low castes ; the men of the washerman family wash the men's clothes, while the women members wash the women's clothes. He is also paid in paddy or wheat and straw by every family he serves. The same holds good for the potter, the blacksmith, the barber and many others.

On special occasions, as for example, a marriage in the village, the Brahmin serves as a priest, the carpenter puts up the *pandal*, the goldsmith makes the ornaments from the gold provided by the owner, the potter makes the pots, the washerman supplies clean clothes, the barber shaves the groom and other family members and relations, the oilman supplies the oil for the lamps and cooking, the shepherd provides wool for the sacred thread which is tied round the waists of the bridal pair, traders (*benajigas*) supply the provisions, basket-makers (*medas*) the baskets, and the untouchable (*holeya*) performs menial tasks and makes a pair of sandals for the groom.[2]

This system functions to the common good of all in an economic situation characterized by chronic insecurity and scarcity. It has built-in correctives which perpetuate its existence. Should a farmer not treat the artisans well during the slack season, they may let him down in a crisis. If a poor menial worker is in danger of starvation, he has to be given food, for should he die, the guilt for the sin of letting him starve falls upon the heads of all members of the village community.

Just as each member is woven in the social structure of the village, so is each member in the domestic life of the family. The family in a village consists of brothers, their parents, wives, unmarried daughters, married sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. They all generally live together and share the pleasures and sorrows of life. A widow is supported by her brothers if childless, by the family of her children if she has borne children. Sons support their parents ; the relationship between the grandparents and grand-children is that of joviality and love. The family takes care of the sick. The income of one family member is shared with the entire family, thus ensuring that the poor are supported by the rich.

The word villager is almost synonymous with an agriculturist because the vast majority of the families in the village either own land or work on land. The farmer scratches the surface of the land with wooden or metallic plough drawn by oxen and depends upon monsoon or water lifted from ponds through a variety of indigenous contrivances for the irrigation of his small plot of land. No wonder then that the land which is held sacred by him and by which he takes the ultimate oath sometimes does not provide him enough grains to exist at a subsistence level. Famine or flood is never far away from him. Villagers are poor, their means are limited and so are their possessions. Families often incur debts which they have no hope of redeeming on account of the high rate of interest. This debt is most often incurred on the occasions of marriage or death, the ceremonies involved in both the events being very costly.

Illiteracy is rampant in the villages. About 85 per cent of the heads of the family are illiterate. Even where the schools are available, they remain poorly attended. Lower class and lower caste families are not enthusiastic about the schooling of their children either because they need the help in the work they do, or they think that education makes them too proud to work with their own hands in the fields and drives them to the cities to further swell up to the number of the educated unemployed.

Life in the village, in general, is dominated by men. In the individual houses, it may be an old widowed relation or the oldest woman in the house who controls the house and has final say in the matter of fixing up a marriage, sale, and purchase of land and even as to how a patient ought to be treated.

RELIGION

In the midst of this poverty and scarcity, illiteracy and ignorance—or perhaps because of them all—, a villager is more predisposed to religion than is an average city dweller. Religion permeates all aspects of life at every moment. On all significant occasions such as birth, marriage, death, constructing a new house or even adding a new room to it, digging a well, selling or purchasing land, sowing and harvesting, or going on a journey, the village astrologer is consulted, and date and time fixed according to his *sastric* advice. Even the village painting, sculpture, architecture, folk-songs, fasts, feasts and festivals, all are coloured by religion.

This religion or religious outlook of the village people is, however, not the same as is that of classical Hinduism. It is the religion of discrimination between right and wrong, between piousness and sin, between keeping one's word or going back on it, between purity and non-purity etc. It is the religion of worship of gods and goddesses, propitiation of the evil spirits and ghosts of the dead, fear of the local village deities and the spirits of rivers, trees and the village-crossing. This religion hardly differentiates between a Hindu, a Muslim or any one else, they all abide by this religion and practice it in their daily life.

Temples to local deities are present in most villages of Tamil Nadu the most popular among such deities is Aiyanar or Sasta. In some districts like South Arcot and Tirunelveli, there is hardly a village without a shrine to him. Aiyanar is the guardian deity of the village and he is believed to ride round the village on the back of vehicles which the pious worshippers have provided for him. The Aiyanar shrine is always at some distance from the village as it is considered unlucky to meet him when he is on his nocturnal rounds. The Aiyanar's servants are the *virans* or demons and it is a common sight along the roads to see immense statues of figures of *virans* of painted bricks and plaster with fearsome looks. The *virans* accompany Aiyanar and the most popular among the *virans* is the Madurai *Viran.*

In the Marava areas, the popular local deity is Karuppan, and Karuppan's shrine can be recognized by the iron chains that hang outside, for this deity is fond of bedecking himself with such chains. Some of the other deities are Mariamman, the dreaded goddess of smallpox and cholera, Kali Amman, Nadiamman etc. Among the

Vanniars of South Arcot, Draupadi of the *Mahabharata* is a special favourite and Draupadi festivals involve a fire-walking ceremony when the worshippers walk on burning cinders, in imitation of Draupadi who was said to have purified herself by passing through fire every year.

The village goddesses are vaguely referred to by the generic name Pidari. Many of the deities can be successfully propitiated by the sacrifice of fowls and goats but some among them dislike the sight of blood. If a disease spreads out, special festivals like the Kodai in the Tirunelveli district are performed in many villages. When rains are not forthcoming at the proper time, the farmers believe that it is due to the curse of Varuna and special prayers are offered to this god. When, however, the drought is prolonged, it is believed that this is caused by the existence of sinners in the village. Accordingly, in periods of specially bad droughts, a figure called Kodumbavi or 'worst of sinners' is made of straw, placed on a bier and dragged round the village ultimately to be burnt in public.

The Andhra farmer has local deities called *Gramadevatas* whom he regards with reverence and obsequiousness. They carry no stamp of religious sanctity, and no Hindu priest would officiate at their ceremonies, nevertheless the villagers regard them with awe, and never fail to do obeisance before them by removing their footwear, folding their hands or kneeling on the ground when they pass by their shrines which are marked by the hanging of chains on the trees under which they are built, the nearby ground being studded with festooned sticks and spears. They are very simple, even crude affairs, generally on the village outskirts, the idol consisting of a stone smeared liberally with oil, saffron, *kumkum* and turmeric. The *Gramadevatas* one comes across in rural Andhra, are innumerable and are given local names such as Nukalamma, Vellamma, Chinnamma, Muthyallamma, Bangaramma, Aukalamma, Pyditalli, Perantallamma and so on. They may not possess the sanctity of the gods but they have powers to punish. If disregarded for too long they can cause disease and disasters.[3]

In the north, the villages and their surrounding areas are studded over with shrines of goddesses like Sitala and Masani who have the power to punish ; gods like Hanuman and Ganesh who remove obstacles, the *samadhis* of saints, gurus and pirs who are believed to help their devotees in time of need. They are worshipped all the year round and annual festivals are held there which attract large crowds of villagers.

RITUALS

Certain rituals form part of the religion in the villages, some of which concern the concepts and practice of medicine. At the time of the wedding, the bridegroom is led to the bride's house on the back of a mare ; this is to make the new family fertile. The youngest brother of the bridegroom or some other child sits behind the bridegroom on the mare ; this is to ensure the first child being a male. A coconut is broken by the bridegroom on the next morning ; this again is to make the bride fertile. All the women folk wear rose-coloured clothes during the ceremonial period of marriage ; the red clothes are symbolic of fertility and act as fertility charms.

After the delivery of the child, the placenta alongwith the navel cord is either buried near the hearth where the daily food is cooked or it is thrown in the river or pond ; both these procedures are supposed to ensure the child's long life. If someone steps over the discarded placenta some ill luck or calamity is likely to befall the child or its mother.[4]

SUPERSTITIONS

Like the rituals, some of the superstitions also influence day-to-day life in the village. The howling of a dog or the hooting of an owl is a bad omen. The calling of a partridge in the forenoon is lucky on the left and unlucky on the right, but in the afternoon these conditions are reversed. It is an inauspicious omen if a jackal meets one on the way. When setting out on any business, if a person meets a corpse coming from the front, there is good luck awaiting him; but if he meets a sweeper, a one-eyed person or woman carrying empty jars to a well, he may as well turn back for he will fail to achieve his object. Hiccup in a person indicates that some friend is thinking of him; if he recollects his friends one by one, the hiccup will stop as soon as the right name comes to the mind. If while arising from bed an ugly person or a one-eyed person is seen, the whole day will pass in misery and without meals. The twitching of the right eye-lid brings good luck and that of the left brings bad luck, but these conditions are reversed in the case of females. The grating of teeth in sleep by a male is an auspicious sign while, grating by a woman or a virgin is symbolic of witchcraft. Rocking a cradle at night or rocking an empty cradle, brings ill luck. The tape should not be put in a pyjama at the night time for fear of getting seven daughters, nor should the pillows be covered in the night. The house should not be cleansed with a broom in the night as otherwise all the money and fortunes will be swept away. A person should not sleep straight facing upwards and keeping both the hands on the chest; it signifies death. Nail parings and hair should not be thrown within the house, or the house will not prosper. The pestle or broom should not be placed upright against the wall, as that brings ill luck, disease or death; a physician can, however, do so to increase his business. No woman should wear the dress of any other woman as it brings some calamity. In certain regions it is believed that a woman wearing white clothes is likely to become a widow. A man who shaves, oils his body, or puts on clean clothes on Tuesday, will shorten his life. No woman with a living husband should bathe on the first Sunday of the month or on a Sunday that falls on the full moon day. It is inauspicious to set out on a journey on a Thursday. The days which are propitious for the commencement of any important undertaking can be ascertained only by the position of the stars, and these only a priest or an astrologer can tell; the new-moon and full-moon days are generally auspicious. At the time of eclipse, a pregnant woman should not move out, otherwise the infant will get deformed. Sexual intercourse at the time of a lunar eclipse is strictly tabooed. It is a bad omen if two persons come to call on a doctor together, for it is a sure sign that the patient will not recover. If any person sees a patient dead in dream, the patient is bound to survive; a false rumour of his death also makes the patient recover from illness. But if a very old man happens to recover from a serious illness, it is a very bad omen; his recovery is believed to be causally connected with the sudden death of a young person of the family. If a patient sees a camel in dream, he is likely to die soon; but if any person sees a serpent biting his left leg, he is likely to get riches from somewhere.[5]

A barren woman during menstruation should not touch a child; should she do so, she will become fertile but the child will die.

HYGIENE

Villages, in general, are a collection of *kaccha* or semi-pucca houses, huddled together in a small area, the fields being outside the village. The entire village is usually sub-divided into several neighbourhoods based on the particular castes predominant in that neighbourhood. The higher caste environments are generally cleaner than those of the lower castes. Outside the village habitation, there are several ponds that come into being when the mud is dug out from these for the construction of the village houses. The water of the pond is used for various purposes such as bathing, washing clothes and utensils; the buffaloes wallow in them as well. The water of some of the ponds is used only for drinking purposes, but this water is never hygienically clean; the night-soil from the surrounding fields where people defaecate indiscriminately, flows into it during the rains and thus causes various water-borne diseases including worm infestations in the intestines, which is one of the commonest diseases of the villagers.

Despite the abundance of space in the countryside, houses are crowded and are of poor quality. Leaky roofs, absence of flooring or ventilation, darkness and dampness are the characteristic features of the majority of houses in the villages. Due to the absence of proper drainage, domestic water usually gets collected in a pit dug outside the house and this serves as a breeding place for mosquitoes and flies.

Cleanliness inside the house is greatly valued by the village folk, but stinking refuse and water puddles in the street just in front of the house is none of their business. Heaps of refuse can always be seen on the periphery and sometimes in open central spaces too ; they continue to decay providing the villages with a peculiar smell.

Cattle and other domestic animals live in proximity to man in the same house, thus adding to the unhygienic atmosphere.

The village folk are not aware of the importance of washing and changing clothes at regular intervals. This is due both to poverty and ignorance. Eating out of common utensils and smoking from the same *hooka,* is more common among the Muslims than the Hindus; this promotes ill health and disease, but the villagers believe that it only promotes common brotherhood and cordial relations. A Hindu wife in the village eats her food from the same utensils which her husband has used just before her.

Though the village diet may be adequate in quantity, it is generally poor in quality; more so because of the traditional vegetarian eating habits of the Hindu villagers. Drinking of spirituous liquors is more common among villagers than among the urban population. Yet all villagers agree that from a health point of view village life is better than city life.

Standards of health in the villages are different from those in a city. While a villager may have foul-smelling breath due to pyorrhoeic gums, may have anaemia and malnutrition due to a poor diet and worm infestation, and at the age of 45 look to be 60, yet when asked how is he, he will say that he has never been ill in life. Many of the debilitating diseases such as worm infestations are not counted as diseases because debilitation is seldom associated in the villager's mind with these worms.

The villagers themselves always feel their life and environment as being most well-suited to healthy living.

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Causation of Disease

The villagers generally believe that good health is a reward for a life of honesty, religious piety, moral rectitude and sexual restraint. The healthy and the long-lived person is generally believed to have never stolen in life, never indulged in excessive sex, never touched tea or alcoholic drinks. He is the one who has scrupulously adhered to the village norms and codes, and pleased the gods. In his past lives as well, he committed no sins.[1]

It is firmly believed that one's life is controlled by the will of God. Nothing moves without His will Besides that, everyone is allotted a particular length of life, and when that time is over, one has to make an exit. No one has changed this; no one can change it. But there is life after death—reincarnation—and one's good and bad acts are taken into account in the next life.

Sickness is the result of wrong-doing, sin (*papa*) and fault (*dosha*). If one has indulged in such acts in this life or in the past lives, he has to suffer from sickness and deprivations, the degree of which depends upon the extent of his sinfulness. Through one's sinful acts one not only brings sickness upon oneself, but also on the members of one's family or community. The cause of disease can be roughly put into the two following categories :

(1) Physical or natural causes.
(2) Supernatural causes.

They may be further sub-divided as :

Physical Causes :

1. Ritual impurity
2. Physical impurity
3. Improper food

4. Improper weather
5. Over-indulgence in sexual acts.

Super-natural causes :

1. Sins of previous life
2. Wrath of gods and goddesses
3. Evil spirits :
    (*a*) Ancestral spirits
    (*b*) Ghosts.
4. Sorcery
5. Witchcraft
6. Evil eye
7. Breach of Taboo.

The above classification suffers from one defect; it gives an impression that there are clear-cut lines of demarcation between the various causes. This, in fact, is not so.

PHYSICAL CAUSES

RITUAL IMPURITIES

A woman in her menses is regarded as impure. In the South, it is believed that when a child is touched by a woman in menstruation, he contacts her impurity in the shape of rickets ; when such a woman participates in a ritual ceremony of the family or community, she transfers her impurity to the family or the community, causing disease or misfortune. Hence a woman in menstruation is not allowed to take part in ritual ceremonies. The villagers believe that they will be inviting divine wrath if they permit such participation. During the marriage ceremony among the Lingayats, there is a practice of fire-walking (*guggal*) ; if there is any menstruating woman present at the ceremony, the fire-walkers are supposed to get their feet burnt. That is why the priests announce loudly and remind them at the beginning of the ceremony : 'If there is any woman in pollution, let her depart.'

A woman in menstruation is generally isolated. There is a three-day quarantine for such a woman and during this period she is treated like an outcaste; she is fed at a distance from the rest, and she has to work with the cowdung in the cattleshed like an outcaste.

It is also believed that a barren woman will become fertile if at the time of menstruation she touches a child. This belief causes a lot of conflict among women in the villages; the barren woman being occasionally blamed if a child of a near relation in the same house or in the neighbourhood falls sick.

PHYSICAL IMPURITY

Touching a low caste or eating food touched by a low caste or eating in the morning before taking a bath is believed to give rise to physical impurity and disease. A high caste Brahmin when he goes out of his village takes his own food and water with him. The food may become stale or he may have to go without food and drink for many hours, yet he prefers that to taking food from a low caste or a stranger.

From the point of view of health, food is considered to be divisible into three categories: *satvic*, *rajasvic*, and *tamasic*, giving rise to purity, passion, and wickedness, respectively. Meat and toddy and other alcoholic drinks come under the category of *tamasic* food; lot of spices, tea and coffee are *rajasvic*; and milk and milk products and fruits taken in moderation constitute a *satvic* diet. A *satvic* food is believed to keep the body healthy; *rajasvic* and *tamasic* foods are productive of diseases. This concept prevails mostly in the South.[2]

IMPROPER FOOD

Due to contact with Unani medicine through *Hakims*, village people all over northern India have developed the concept of 'hot' and 'cold' as qualities of certain foods. Meat, fish, eggs, milk, jaggery etc. are examples of 'hot' food; curd, lemon, cow's milk as of 'cold' food. A combination of 'hot' and 'cold' food or taking one type of food after another, or taking 'hot' food in hot weather and 'cold' food in cold weather is believed to give rise to various diseases.

Diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera and typhoid are recognized to be caused by eating wrong combination of foods.

IMPROPER WEATHER

Common cold and pneumonia and occasional cases of fever are believed to be caused by exposure to cold wind and rain.

OVER-INDULGENCE IN SEXUAL ACTS

This is firmly believed to be the root cause of physical and mental weakness which ultimately leads to various bodily diseases. One explanation of tuberculosis is that if either a man or woman who has fever indulges in sexual intercourse, he or she is liable to get tuberculosis. When a person has fever, his blood boils because of the heat of the body. Again, when a healthy man and woman have sexual relations, their blood boils; after it has been churned, semen forms and is discharged. Now, if a man or woman has fever and they unite sexually, his blood is twice boiled; as a result the blood becomes thin and flows out of the lungs. At that moment he develops wounds in his lungs and consequent haemoptysis (blood in phlegm). Also, if a man has sexual relations with a woman right after taking food, he may get tuberculosis.[3]

Continuous loss of semen through any means, makes a villager develop a feeling of guilt and he associates it with almost any physical disability or disease that he may develop later on.

Besides the above-mentioned physical causes, there are others as well. Skin diseases like boils and eczema are believed to be caused by impurities in the blood. Congenital defects are attributed to the exposure of the pregnant mother to a solar or lunar eclipse. Over-exertion is another factor incriminated very frequently.

SUPERNATURAL CAUSES

If a man dies of what seems to be a minor illness, such as a thorn prick or a mild fever, the tendency is to explain death not in terms of the physical cause but in terms of the supernatural. Diseases involving disturbance of mental faculties are also considered to be caused by supernatural agencies; and so are cases of persistent headaches, intermittent fevers, continual stomach disorders, rickets and other wasting diseases among children, and menstrual troubles, repeated abortions etc. among women. Similarly, such calamities as total blindness, death of children in quick succession and too many deaths in the family within a short time are believed to indicate the involvement of supernatural causes. These supernatural causes may be any one of the following:

SINS OF PREVIOUS LIFE

The diseases grouped under this head are leprosy, childlessness, abortion, deformity of limbs, blindness or a hairy body. Leprosy and sinfulness are correlated; indeed a leper is regarded as a most sinful patient. His condition is attributed to the fact that he must have committed a most heinous crime in his previous life. Manu in his *Samhita* has said that 'leprosy results in the next birth if one steals a Brahmin's gold in this life'. Another scripture elucidates crime and its punishment in this way: "To kill a hundred cows is equal to killing one Brahmin. To kill a hundred Brahmins is equal to killing one woman. To kill a hundred women is equal to killing an infant. To kill a hundred infants carries sin equal to the sin of telling a lie. Only those whose sins are equal to that of telling a hundred lies become lepers." Such Puranic and scriptural beliefs prevail very widely and deeply among village folk.

Another skin disease, herpes zoster in which there are lesions on one side of the body in line with a nerve, which may simulate a snake, is believed to be caused by the heinous crimes of a previous existence. The snake god is propitiated in this condition.

A family in which such diseases occur, makes an effort to conceal the fact. Abortion is never mentioned openly. A barren woman is not allowed to take part in religious or ritual ceremonies like a wedding. One who is blind is not expected to get married. Any hair on the body of a girl is taken to be a token of sin. During the inspection of a girl for marriage, people take severe note of hair on the body in villages in the South. Sometimes marriage negotiations have broken down because of this.

WRATH OF GODS AND GODDESSES

Sitala is believed to be the eldest of the seven sisters named after different diseases in which there are skin rashes. All these sisters are worshipped at the temple of Sitala. Their images look like ordinary women but for the four arms. The Sitala (*Vadi Mai*) is represented with four arms and as seated on a donkey. She holds a broom and a winnowing fan in two of her hands, and a water-pot (*karmandal*) and two other objects in the other; these last two objects are used in the process of removing 'heat' and disease by the goddess.

In the South also, many goddesses are believed to be associated with causing different diseases. In the Telugu-speaking areas, particularly in the Telangana districts of Hyderabad, the following goddesses are associated with the diseases mentioned against them: (1) Pochamma with small-pox, (2) Mutyalamma with chicken-pox, (3) Balamma with sterility in women, (4) Mahakalamma with cholera.[4]

Epidemic diseases are believed to be caused by the wrath of gods and goddesses so as to bring about normalcy in the social and moral life of the village. When epidemics break out, the villagers propitiate Dyamavva, Durgavva, Basava, Ishwara, Hanuman and other local gods and goddesses.

EVIL SPIRITS

Evil spirits that cause diseases among human beings are of different types They may be the spirits of dead ancestors, ghosts of people who have passed away under very unusual circumstances, or non-human demons of wicked nature.

Ancestral spirits: They expect to be remembered and provided for at the occasion of their death anniversaries which are celebrated as *sarad*. If they are ignored and 'not given their due', they warn the family by causing some minor but noticeable trouble. It is for the members of the family to take this 'timely warning' and remove the cause of the ancestor's anger. Failure to do so often leads to serious consequences such as disease and death. Sometimes the ancestral spirits convey their anger in dreams to some member of the family. The ancestral spirits are not very difficult to please. When the cause of their anger is known, an apology followed by worship is often enough to appease them.

Ghosts: Death in the following circumstances is believed to turn a dead man into a ghost :—(1) Persons too much attached to sex, wealth and children. (2) Persons dying without satisfying their sexual cravings. (3) Persons meeting an accidental death by falling from a tree, drowning or lightning. (4) Persons committing suicide. (5) Persons dying with an intense hatred for someone. (6) Persons who have been murdered. (7) Pregnant women; the ghost of the pregnant woman commonly called *churail* is the most dangerous one.

These ghosts are believed to live on the thick branches of the banyan tree, old ruined wells, derelict houses and old temples on the fringe of the village. They appear on new-moon (*amavasya*) nights. They attack people either on their own or on the advice of a god or sorcerer. Their victims are persons generally in a state of ritual impurity, as they are highly vulnerable in that state. A menstruating woman or a woman who has just delivered a child, a bride who is in 'pollution', or a girl who is in puberty; these are the favourite targets of spirits and ghosts, and the villagers take precautions to protect them by never allowing them to move out alone particularly past places which are known to be haunted by ghosts. The diseases where a ghost etiology is suggestible, are termed generally as 'airy' *hawa* diseases. This is because the spirits are supposed to move about freely in the air and enter into a person just as air does.

In Aligarh District, among the lower caste Hindus, and the

Muslims alike, one of the commonly recognized evil-spirits in Chinaura village is known as *jamoga*. This evil-spirit is recognized to be responsible for attacking newly-born infants. Its attack is on the jaw of the infant and after two or three days it is difficult for the infant even to cry.*

The spirit of *jamoga* is believed to enter the house through the main gate or even through small holes in the walls of the room; it can even enter in the guise of a human being. Hence, as a precautionary measure, at the time of child-birth, the mother is shifted to the innermost room (*kothri*) of the house where little sunlight and fresh air is available. No one except closely related women can enter the room. A fire is kept burning near the threshold of the room and also near the mother of the newly-born. A knife blade, a pair of shoes and the skull of a monkey are also kept near her, and it is believed that in the presence of these, the evil spirit cannot enter the room and intrude into the body of the infant.[5]

Diseases in which the patient suddenly gets convulsions or in which there is a sudden high fever accompanied with delirium, are believed to be caused by ghosts. In Rajasthani villages this is the commonest explanation for such conditions, and it is only a medicine man (*bhopa*) who is usually consulted.

SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT

If a child suddenly suffers from a loss of appetite, somebody gets a headache without warning, a mother's breasts go dry, a cow suddenly ceases to give milk, two or three domestic animals die at a time, or a healthy man dies suddenly, it is considered to be the work of a sorcerer or a witch.

Magic is also used to influence the behaviour of others. A woman may try to control her wayward husband with its help; she may endeavour to influence her son to lean towards her and away from her daughter-in-law; or she may try to influence her husband away from the mother-in-law. Stories based on magic are common talk of the village women.

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* *Jamoga* seems to be tetanus whose causative agent probably enters the body of the infant through the wound caused in the process of cutting the cord with an old knife, sickle (*hasia*) or a glass piece by the village midwife.

Jealousy, envy and greed makes them resort to magic. Those who resort to it in the villages are considered evil and irreligious. It is believed that those who indulge in magic, die a very painful death and many a time suffer lot of misfortunes and cause their family members to die unnatural deaths.

Villagers believe in the existence of witches who are particularly dangerous to the health of children. To be called a witch (*dakan*, *dayan*) is the most insulting name, generally uttered at the height of a quarrel. A woman suspected of being a witch is sometimes banished from her home or village; she may even be put to death.

EVIL EYE

Children are considered to be very susceptible to the evil eye. It is believed that as soon as a person, even if it be a close relation, utters the sentence, looking at the child, "How beautiful the child is", the child is bound to suffer. It may suffer from diarrhoea, develop fever and cry too much and in a short time may become weak. Animals and even beautiful buildings are also considered susceptible to the effect of the evil eye. According to the people, healing magic known as *jar phook* (blowing and whiffing) is the only therapy for it.

BREACH OF TABOO

Breach of certain taboos is believed by village folk to be responsible for certain diseases. Illicit sexual relations with a woman of a lower caste is an unpardonable breach of taboo and is considered to be responsible for venereal diseases (commonly known as *garmi* in the village).

Similarly, deadly sins such as the molestation of a poor, weak and helpless person is considered to be responsible for leprosy.

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3

Treatment

Factors that cause illness in a villager are not believed to be operating singly, but in groups—with some one factor predominating. So is the case with the treatment also ; it displays a fusion of physical, moral, religious, and magical approaches, one or the other predominating in a particular disease or at a particular time. For the sake of description, we shall take up different approaches separately and towards the end of this chapter we shall see how the different approaches get mixed up in actual practice.

TREATMENT OF PHYSICAL CAUSES

In the chapter on the Causation of Disease, we described the causes under two broad categories : first, the Physical or natural causes, second, the Supernatural. The Physical causes were subdivided into (1) Ritual impurity, (2) Physical impurity, (3) Improper food, (4) Improper weather and (5) Excessive sexual intercourse. These physical causes, except in some cases, are believed to give rise to ill-health or disease, the nature of which is rather vague and ill-defined. As such, in all diseases giving rise to weakness, the villagers take care in avoiding all the causative factors, particular attention being given to the food that the patient takes.

As regards the use of drugs, most of the villagers take drugs, mostly herbals, that form part of the kitchen grocery of every village home. If a particular herb is not available there, they get it from the grocer's shop or even go to the village *vaid* or *hakim*, if there is one in the village, and demand to be given that particular medicine. The number of such herbal preparations is legion, varying from region to region depending upon its availability. These household remedies form part of the Ayurvedic or Unani treatment.

In the villages in the north, the concept of *dharan digna* as a cause of many symptoms but more particularly of pain in the abdomen or diarrhoea, dysentery, prevails very widely. *Dharan* is some kind of 'pulse' under the navel, *digna* is displaced Over-exertion, or a sudden jerk may throw it off the centre. If it is shifted up, a person has constipation, and if it moves to the side or comes down lower, it causes diarrhoea. They say, one can make out that the *dharan* is shifted by holding the finger and thumb together and placing it on the navel and pressing in. After sometime, one can hear a tick-tick sound, but this is only possible if the *dharan* is in its normal condition, otherwise the finger has to be shifted to the side or lower down, to locate the sound.

There are many ways of shifting the *dharan* back to its proper place. One simple way is to make the person lie down straight and jerk his limbs with a good shake. Rubbing the nerve near the ankle also helps. Another way is to make a small *diva* (dish-like) with *atta* (wheat flour) and light a wick in it. This is known as *diva chun*. It is lighted, placed on the navel, and covered up by a vessel (*lota*) with a big opening. When it is allowed to remain in this fashion for some time, the *dharan* comes back into place. In another method which is popular, the round part of the *hookah* is placed in the navel and twisted around tight.

For rheumatism a pit is dug in which a fire of cow-dung cakes is made. After the pit has become sufficiently hot, something is put on the floor of the pit, so that when the patient lowers himself into it, his feet do not burn. The patient is made to sit in the heated pit for about five minutes, after which he comes out and is immediately covered with clothing. The patient is naked except for his loin-cloth when he enters the pit.

Having discussed in brief the treatment of the physical causes of disease, we shall now pass on to the discussion of the treatment of the Supernatural.

TREATMENT OF THE WRATH OF GODS AND GODDESSES

The traditional explanation for smallpox is that it is sent by the enraged goddess Sitala. She is especially worshipped by women of the lower castes. Vaccination is said to annoy the goddess and it is believed that if vaccination or medication is resorted to, the touchy goddess will be angered and would surely kill or maim more people in the village.

When a patient has fever for two or three days and makes no effort to treat it, but instead takes a cold bath after working, smallpox may develop inside his body. The heat comes out of the body in the shape of blisters. If, at such a time, the stars are also unfavourable, they also play a part in converting the fever into smallpox.

Treatment of smallpox consists in propitiating the enraged goddess, and this is done in a variety of ways in different parts of the country.

At the time of Basora festival (March-April), some village families around Delhi travel to Gurgaon, in Haryana, where the Gurgaon-wali-Mata is enshrined. On the evening of the sixth of *Chait* (March-April), wheat porridge sweetened with *gur* is cooked by women of the Jat, Brahmin, Baniya, and Qumar castes. This food is set aside uneaten. Early the next morning, having bathed and dressed in their best clothes, the women carry the porridge, some rice, gram and water to the goddess' shrine. They go in family groups, women of the same caste walking together with their youngest children, singing songs in praise of Gurgaon-wali-Mata: "O Mata, you gave us children; now protect them from disease!" The shrine to the goddess is a very simple structure. Here the women-folk pray, and pour some water into a brick slab which represents the goddess. To this, they add some porridge, rice grain, and a smear of turmeric. Some of the women make vows to present a *dupatta* (head cover) to the goddess or to distribute sweets to all the children, if their own child recovers from sickness. A *bhangi* (sweeper) may bring a cock and hold it over a child's head. To have the cock flutter its wings over a child in this way is considered auspicious and conducive to long life. It is mostly the women who take part in such ceremonies, the men generally keep away.[1]

In East Punjab villages, a small shrine made of bricks stands outside almost every village in honour of Sitala goddess. When a child suffers from smallpox or an allied disease, a garland of flowers brought from the shrine is kept near the bed of the child. On complete recovery, he is taken there to pay obeisance to the Devi. Whey is poured over its shrine and sweets are distributed to the children. Some of the Sikh families do not take their children to the Sitala's temple, but to the *gurdwara* and get a garland from the Sikh priest (*granthi*). Even those families who visit the Sitala's shrine invariably pay their respects to the *gurdwara*[2]

The Sindhi villagers worship the mother-goddess Sitala for the whole period of the attack of smallpox. On the third night of the attack, one-third of a cardamom is administered to the patient in milk while the remaining bit is given to him on the two successive nights for making the goddess 'visible'. The patient sleeps on a cot and the women-folk sing songs in praise of Sitala.

On the seventh day, the patient is made to ride a donkey, the vehicle of the goddess, after which boiled grain and some money are distributed; and grains for the donkey are given to its master. On the same evening, the mother of the patient, after taking a bath, gets a new water-pot. This pot is filled with water. A branch of the *lao* (Tamarise indica) tree is put in it and with this she pours water over the trees and the mother goddess. This ceremony is called *Belhro* and water is poured to bring coolness. In a plate on the cot near the patient's head is placed a mirror, a silken handkerchief, five rupees and five *nakulas* (a sweet preparation). On the eighth day, she prepares sweet wheat-flour cakes in an earthen pan on a new mud-fire place. This is called *thadho* (the cold). Till the 21st day, the women observe five or seven *thados* and visit the temple of the goddess, singing all along the way. During the entire period of the 21 days, the mother takes the water pot and sprinkles water on the trees and after pouring water in the shrine and singing songs, she returns and sprinkles water over the patient. She keeps the water pot on a heap of sand by the patient's side. During this period several taboos are observed. The whole house is kept clean and cold, no fire is burnt in the room of the patient, no outsider is allowed to remove fire from the house, nothing is given in charity, no sweeping is done with the broom in that room and no sewing is done by the ladies. No onion or garlic is used either. Meat is an absolute taboo. Images of Sitala prepared from cow-dung are fixed on the outside wall of the house. On the last day, the patient is taken to the shrine on a donkey's back in procession. The womenfolk, in their ceremonial clothes, sing to the accompaniment of music while a person walking at the head of the procession goes on sprinkling water mixed with milk. The patient is seated in a big metal tray, and a sieve in which are placed a cake with seven red marks and twenty other small pieces of it, a stone piece, cooked rice, and silver Sitala image in a necklace form, is placed on his head. Over the sieve is poured cow's urine mixed with milk, and the same falls through the sieve on the body of the patient. The ladies apply red marks on their foreheads and sing hymns for the mercy of the goddess. The Sitala necklace is then worn by the patient and is removed while the patient's mother wears a necklace of golden beads (*mahan mala*). The ladies make cloth offerings to the goddess, sometimes tie red ribbons to it and besmear it with red paint. Offerings are also made to the temple-priest and a coconut is broken as an offering to the goddess and its pieces are distributed. The patient is then brought back in procession with music and dancing.

All through the out-break of the disease, women go about in groups watering every tree on the way to the shrine so as to cool the goddess. The lamps are lit at the shrine every night. Tuesday is sacred to this goddess which the women celebrate by eating stale food prepared on the previous day.

The annual festival observed by the Sindhi villagers in honour of the Sitala goddess is called *thadhri* or the cooling festival. It falls on the seventh day of the waning moon in the month of *Savan* (July-August) every year. On the previous day, the ladies prepare cakes and curd preparations, in the same manner as on the last day of the attack of smallpox, and go singing on the festival day to the local shrine, make offerings and eat the cold meals prepared earlier. Fire is generally not burnt in the house on that day. The seventh day of the rising moon in the last two months of the local year, are also sacred to this goddess and are called *Satain* or *Saptami*. These days are also observed by ladies by eating cold meals (*thadho*) after making offerings to the goddess.[3]

The smallpox goddess is also worshipped annually in the South so as to keep her appeased and avoid her wrath. This annual worship of Pochamma, the goddess of smallpox, is organized by the village community on a Thursday or Saturday in the month of *Shravana* (July-August). The actual day for the ceremony is fixed by the village elders in consultation with the Deshmukh and the Brahmin priest. A day previous to the celebration, the Madiga drum-beaters go round the village announcing the programme and asking the people to get ready. The potters (*kummaris*) clean the shrines of Pochamma, Mutyalamma and Mahakalamma. The washermen (*sakalis*) whitewash them. The village youths construct small palm leaf sheds in front of the shrines. Wives of the village menials (*tularis*) sweep and besmear the ground around these places with red earth.

On the day of celebration, every family prepares its *bonam*. They cook rice in a new earthen pot decorated on the outside by an application of vermilion and turmeric paste. This decorated pot containing rice is known as *bonam*. Most people prepare it in their homes; but some prefer to do so near the shrine itself. In the afternoon the Madigas go to their own Pochamma shrine, which is near to but quite separate from that of the other shrines belonging to the rest of the community, and offer their *bonams* to the goddess. They worship her, and sacrifice goats, sheep and fowls. Some are possessed by the goddess at this time. But they have to hurry back as their presence is required for the procession of the other castes. In the meantime the potter (*kummeri*) who officiates as the village priest for this ceremony goes round the village collecting oil from every house for burning lamps near the shrine, and rice for preparing the *bonam* on behalf of the whole village. The rice thus collected is cooked by the *kummari* women in a huge pot near the shrine.

An hour before the scheduled time of worship, the Madigas start beating their drums at a central place in the village. People start collecting there with their *bonams*. Some carry these on their heads; others take them to the shrines in bullock-carts. The Madiga drum-beaters walk at the head of the procession, followed at some distance by the *Deshmukh* and other respectable people and village elders, and then by common people of the village. By the time they reach the shrine, some people are possessed by the goddess. At the shrine, the *kummari* first offers rice from the common village *bonam* to the goddess. After doing this, he withdraws from the scene for a time so as to enable the Brahmin and the *komti* to make offerings from their *bonams*. Then the *kummari* firmly establishes himself as the priest, and offers rice from the *bonams* of all the other castes. In this, precedence is given to upper castes in a very rigid way. One after another, castes lower to each other in the traditional hierarchy are called upon to come forward to make their offerings. Within a caste itself, people occupying a superior status in respect of their position in the village organization, age and wealth, are given precedence over the less favourably placed members of their group. This often creates difficulties and is instrumental in causing tensions and enmities between different castes or between different families of the same caste. Alongside the offerings of rice, goat, sheep and fowl are also sacrificed on behalf of the different families. The Golla shepherds present a specified number of goats and sheep every year to the community which is now sacrificed on behalf of the entire village. The head and the fore-limbs of the sacrificed animal are left in front of the shrine; the rest of it, alongwith the *bonam*, is carried home by each family; when all the sacrifices are over, the people return home and feast on the rice and meat.

Muslims also participate in this festival. They do not believe in any Hindu gods, but are as afraid of the village gods and goddesses as the Hindus. However, they do not participate in the worship ; sacrifices on their behalf are made by the barber or the washerman.[4]

Thus we see that in the villages all over India, the goddess of smallpox is worshipped both during an attack of the disease requesting her to cure the patient, and annually as a preventive measure against the disease.

Not only the gods and goddesses but also other religious people like saints and ascetics are believed to possess healing powers against disease. People make tombs (*samadhis*) around the mortal remains of such people and a visit to these places is believed to bring about cure of many a disease. *Samadhis* of saints, *gurus* and *pirs* are located all over the country-side in and around the villages and people visit them even from far off places. One such shrine called Dhoripur in the village Daleke in East Punjab is believed to possess supernatural powers in curing rabies. Near the same village, a gurdwara called *Dukh Niwaran* meaning 'gurdwara of the end of miseries', situated at a distance of eight miles from Daleke, is often visited by the villagers when they are not able to get rid of a disease. They take a dip in the adjoining tank and offer *prashad* at the temple. The water in the tank of the Golden Temple, Taran Taran, is believed to cure leprosy. Gurdwara Nanaksar (ten miles from Daleke) is visited by villagers as it is believed that young children suffering from wasting (*soka*) can be cured by a dip in the temple's tank. Gurdwara Cheherta, 18 miles from Daleke, is also believed to possess similar powers. A pond in the village Chambla is believed to have curative powers for skin diseases. A dip in the Darbar Sahib tank (Golden Temple), Amritsar, is considered not only holy but its water is believed to possess magical powers for curing all kinds of diseases and alleviating misery.[5]

PRIESTLY TREATMENT

Religious-minded as they are, the villagers have a lot of faith in the village priests and temple deities to cure them of their diseases. A village priest is no less a medicine-man ; while he invokes the deity for the cure of the patient, sometimes he is also well informed about the use of common herbal preparations in various diseases.

Temple priests, when they act as medicine-men, hold special sessions, once a week or so, and then the patients collect around them from far and near. Some of these priests, while invoking their deity, also go in a trance and in that state make a diagnosis of the disease and suggest a line of treatment. People have great faith in this sort of treatment.

Such sessions for medical cure have been reported and described from some of Rajasthan villages though they are held in other places as well.

In one of the Rajasthan villages, Sujarupa, an all night ceremony is held at a shrine on the top of a little hillock near Hamaton-ki-guar. Priests (*bhopas*) who are potters by profession, begin formal proceedings by chanting a series of verses in a high-pitched voice. Men and women participate in the singing. After about an hour, a young man sitting in front gives a sudden cry, and goes into a sort of fit ; he shakes, gasps, and convulses ; he, then, gets on his feet and runs into the shrine, picks up a handful of chains and belabours his own back with them, panting and grunting as he does so. After this, he comes out from inside the shrine and shouts something and then goes in once more. This he does fifteen times one after the other. What he utters are prophecies about rain, crops, diseases. Afterwards, as he sits in the shrine, people come to him singly, pouring out their offerings of a few handfuls of corn on the floor before him and ask him about the outcome of a sickness in their family, or a proposed marriage or the loss of their cattle. Still shaking and panting, he looks towards the images of gods and gasps a brief reply.

At another shrine, another *bhopa* holds Sunday-night sessions. He goes into a trance while the patients and supplicants crouch before him in turn. He makes a diagnosis and suggests the line of treatment. He blows over them, pats them and in some cases sucks out the disease. People bring him offerings of nuts and lemons, grains and other edibles.

In Delwara as in Sujarupa, the patients go to the priests of a number of shrines in the vicinity. In the shrine of Vijashan-Mata, every Sunday night the priest becomes possessed and sits quivering on the floor in front of the image of the goddess, while a long succession of patients and supplicants come before him to be diagnosed and treated. The patients come with all sorts of complaints like diarrhoea, dysentery, 'possession' and sorcery. They do not provide the priest with their history of illness, the priest himself is supposed to know that. All that the patient expects to be given is the assurance by the priest that 'you will get well'. This simple assurance uttered by the priest with the blessing of the deity is enough to make many of the patients really well.[6]

In some of the Mewar villages, the deity of *bheru* is well known for bringing about cures against many diseases. There are different shrines of *bheru* in different places and each one is famous for providing a cure against certain specific diseases. *Bheru* of Ghoda Khera village is popular for giving children to hopeful parents; this is done on a Sunday. The *bheru* of Bhamrashya village is famous for the cure of dog-bite; a *jevdi* (enchanted thread) is given to be tied on the infected part of the body and it is believed that it has its effect; the *bheru* prescribes medicines and forbids certain types of food and activities to the patients. *Bheru* of Bhader village is known to have powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience; diagnosis of diseases and forecasting events are its speciality. Besides that, it safeguards the interests of his pilgrims, cures the diseased, gives the issueless family a 'cradle' etc.

The *bheru's* shrines have their own *bhopas* who get into a trance in a special ceremony and then bless individual persons. In case of a pregnant woman, who has lost all her previous children, it is suggested that she should take bath from a *lota* and collect all the water in a kneading plate (*parat*). This water should be brought to the deity a month prior to the delivery. After the birth, one of the silver ornaments of the mother should be touched with the new-born child and be kept inside. It is also suggested to her that if the child remains alive, he should not wear the clothes of the house for a specific period and be garbed with clothes got by begging others for it.

For a sick child, the normal prescription from *bheru* is that the child should be bathed in hot water and his clothes be changed. The mother should then go alone to the well for bathing.

In one case, all the four corners of the *sari* of the diseased child's mother were taken in one hand by the *hajuriya* (assistant of *bhopa*) and were dipped into a bowl filled with water.[7]

TREATMENT OF EVIL SPIRITS

Belief in ghosts and demons is very wide-spread. It is prevalent more in the south than in the north. Every village in the south is believed to be surrounded by evil spirits, who are always looking to inflict disease and misfortune on the villagers. They lurk everywhere, on the tops of palmyra trees, in caves and rocks, in ravines and chasms. They fly about in the air, like birds of prey, ready to pounce on any unprotected victim ; and the Indian villagers pass through life in constant dread of these invisible enemies.

In the south, protection against diseases and misfortunes is sought through the intervention of the guardian deities, as for example *gramdevatas,* the local village deities, or through the leaders of the evil spirits who by appropriate conciliation are induced to keep the evil spirits in proper control so as not to harm mankind. The chief of these demon-guardians in south India is Aiyanar or 'honourable father' or, as he is also called, *sastra* or *sasta* (ruler). Mounted on a horse or elephant, he rides, sword in hand, over hill and dale to clear the land of evil spirits ; any one who meets him and his demon troop, dies at once. When he is not riding, he appears as a richly dressed red-coloured man wearing a crown, with lines of sacred ashes (*vibhut*) on his forehead ; he has two wives, who are also worshipped.[8]

Bhairava, the consort of the Mother, in his form as Kal Bhairava, cures diseases caused by demons.

Near the Mullukara Railway station in Cochin in Kerala State, on a flat-topped hillock is a sculptured figure in relief of Siva belonging to 6th or 7th century A.D. This place is an important pilgrim centre for all castes, as it is believed that the deity can be invoked to drive away spirits and cure different diseases. When, for example, a limb is affected, figures of it in wood, granite, or pottery are offered ; when the disease is more general, effigies of the entire body are offered. Cradles are offered if children are wanted; figures of breasts by young women who have them under-developed; figures of animal pests that destroy crops *e.g.*, the boar, rat etc. are also offered ; these object are offered so that the attention of the deity is drawn to the existence of these troubles.

All these offerings are placed in front of the sculptured image for a short while and then removed and heaped up by the side of the temple. Worshippers at the shrine make rice porridge and place it as *nivedyam* (food-offering) before the image.[9]

Similar places are found all over the countryside.

In case a patient has suffered from a disease thought to be caused by an evil spirit, ghost or demon, then efforts are made to drive away the spirit and to exorcise the patient.

Driving Away the Evil Spirit : When someone falls sick suddenly and possession by an evil spirit is suspected, different methods of driving away the spirit are employed. The elder women of the family, through their own efforts, try to drive away the spirit. They throw chillies in the fire and ask the patient to inhale the smoke, trying to evict the spirit through the nuisance of the smoke. They ask the patient to chew black peppers as well, till the spirit through the patient speaks and promises to depart. After the patient thus gets well, a bread (*roti*) as big as the palm of one's hand is made, smeared with oil, taken three times round the person and then thrown away out of the village, indicting the final eviction of the spirit. Sometimes, a brick is heated and made red hot. In the night, when the whole village is quiet, and there is nobody roaming about, the red-hot brick is removed, placed on a tray (*thali*) and a little cow's urine is dropped on it. This *thali* with the red hot brick and urine is placed in front of the patient, who is fully covered up. He is made to stay in this hot vapour for sometime. Smoke from the smouldering dung of the donkeys is also used for the same purpose.

EXORCISM

If the evil spirit cannot be driven away by laymen, then a person who knows the job well, is called. He may be a village exorcist, *ojha* or *sayana* or a religious exorcist. The village exorcist blows over the patient through a pipe or sweeps over the diseased part or the whole of the body with a broom made of leaves, uttering powerful and nasty spells at the same time. The patient either visits the *ojha* or, as more often happens, the *ojha* comes with his assistants. In that case the patient's entire family may be required to assist in preparing altars, sacrifices, or feasts, and giving clues to the exorcist that may help him in identifying the troublesome ghost.

A case of a person in a Punjab village who became possessed by evil spirits and who was exorcised later, is related as follows :

> There was a man named Harphul from our community. He was a young boy of eighteen. About three months ago, he was working at the cane-crusher. Just after sunset, one day, he took some fresh jaggery from the cane-crusher and went toward the pond, eating it. There he got fever. Somehow he walked back to the cane-crusher but could not move after that. He was carried back to his house. His temperature went up. Later he had diarrhoea. He was made to lie down under a heap of clothes, and they made him drink hot tea now and then. When he did not get better after three days, they consulted a man who was supposed to have the power of diagnosing such ailments. He said that Harphul had fallen victim to an evil spirit. So they sent for a man from Rohtak who could drive evil spirits away. This man gave him black pepper to eat, after he had recited some *mantras* over it; then he burned a *ghi* lamp and offered worship to it. Then he asked the spirit to reveal his identity. The patient spoke out, and it was found that he was actually under the influence of two spirits.
>
> About ten or twelve years ago, there was a lame *bhangi* (sweeper) who had a very miserable life. He committed suicide at sixty by jumping into

a well. At about the same time, there was also a person who worked black magic ; he also died. These were the two spirits who had entered Harphul's body. The *sayana* forced them to speak out through the voice of the boy. They said that they had been sitting by the pond, when Harphul came by, eating sugarcane. He did not offer a piece to them. Then they complained that Harphul had trampled over them, and that they felt very annoyed with him.

The *sayana* played a small drum, waved a broom of peacock feathers over the head of the patient, and recited something to call up powers to 'aid' him in driving the spirits away. The *sayana* threatened the spirits, saying that if they did not leave immediately, he would take them along with him and would not release them. He asked them to name a price at which they would release the boy. They said that if some sweets, sugar drops, and cooked rice were placed in the fields to the north of the village, they would let him go. The boy's relatives sent the provisions to the proper place, and then the spirits went out from the boy. The *sayana* left after taking gur, flour, and *ghi*, and a cash offering of a rupee and four annas to give to the goddess 25 miles away. He had sought her power in driving away the spirits, and he had promised to give her an offering if he succeeded. At the end of the ceremony, the boy admitted before everyone that he was no longer under the influence of the spirits. After the curer had left, he said the spirits were still there and wanted to drag him along with them. He was sick for seven days, and then, two days after the *sayana* left, he died.[10]

An example of driving out the evil spirit from a diseased female patient in a Bengal village, is as follows :

The patient was jumping, dancing, stamping on the floor, making herself almost naked, now shrieking, muttering unintelligible sounds.

As soon as the *ojha* entered the room, she sent forth an unearthly yell, and went to a corner. The exorcist, who was an able-bodied, middle-aged, rough-looking peasant, sat on a wooden plank on the floor, and began to blow with his mouth, and to utter some *mantras*.

Rising from his seat and approaching the patient, the *ojha* said, "Who are you ? Where do you live ?"

The patient with a strong nasal accent, said, "What have you to do with me or my place of abode ?"

Ojha : But you must tell me who you are or you will feel the consequence.

Patient : Do your worst. I won't tell you who I am. I defy you to injure me.

Ojha : By Mahadeva ! If you do not reply to my question, I will pound your bones in a mortar.

Patient : I won't reply to your questions.

On this, the *ojha* began to mutter the *mantras,* to blow with his mouth with all his might ; and then be laboured the patient with a bamboo twig which was in his hand. The patient shrieked with agony, and then said, with the invariable nasal twang, that she was ready to answer all his questions.

Ojha : Who are you ?

Patient : I am a *bhut*, a subject of Mahadeva.

Ojha : Where do you live ?

Patient : I formerly lived in the big mango tree on the south-west corner of the tank Himasagara ; but sometime ago I changed my residence and have taken up my abode on the *tal* (palmyra) tree in the corner of Badan's house.

Ojha : Before you became *bhut*, whose body did you animate in this world ?

Patient : This is a question which I am forbidden to answer. It is a secret of the spirit-world.

Ojha: But why have you come into the body of *chhoto bou* ?

Patient : Because she is vain in her beauty, and because she looks into the faces of men and smiles.

Ojha : You must leave her immediately.

Patient : You cannot force me to leave her.

Ojha : I can't, you say ? Just wait.

So saying, he again began unmercifully to flog the patient, who flew about like lightning from one end of the room to the other, her eyes stairing wildly, her hair dishevelled, her clothes falling off her body, the *ojha* closely following. Thump succeeded thump. Groans, shrieks, and unearthly nasal sounds filled the room, and everyone present was horror-struck. After a little while, the patient took breath and said, (or rather the ghost in her), that she would go away in the course of an hour. The *ojha* insisted on instant departure, and flagellation commenced afresh. At last, the *ojha* took out of his bag, the root of a certain herb, wrapped it up in a *pan* leaf, and forced it into the mouth of the patient, who chewed and swallowed it. She remained perfectly still for a few minutes. The *ojha* again said : "Are you going immediately to leave *chhoto bou* ?"

Patient : Yes.

Ojha : What sign will you give of your departure ? How shall we know that you have left her ?

> Patient : When I go away I shall carry with my teeth a curry stone from this room to the end of the verandah.
>
> *Ojha* : Very good.
>
> The *ojha* ordered the curry stone of the family to be brought. It was about ten pounds in weight. She caught it between her teeth and proceeded towards the door, the threshold of which she had scarcely stepped over when she fell down and fainted. Other girls took her up insensible and in lock jaw. A pair of nut-crackers made of iron was pushed between her teeth, a little water was poured down her throat, and she revived. On becoming conscious, she pulled the veil down her face, and said in a whisper, "Why I am here, sister ? Why are so many people assembled here ?" The *ojha* at whose supernatural skill everyone wondered, was rewarded with one rupee and an old *dhuti*, and the crowd dispersed.[11]

SORCERY

Belief in sorcery is very widespread among the village people. Amulets are used for their protective effect, and charms for their curative effect. Amulets of different types are worn by people for different purposes, either as a necklace, bracelet or around the waist; some of the children are found to be wearing about half a dozen amulets, made of copper, iron or other metals, a few coloured threads, a box-like thing with contents, a tooth of a pig etc. These are distributed mostly by village priests, *pundits*, or *ojhas* or some old women.

For a cure against the magic of the enemy, charms are used. Each region has its own type of charms and their number is legion. They are used not only against diseases but against other misfortunes also, or to have other desirable results.

Charms against fevers of different types are many. In a case of continuous fever, dust collected at night from the junction of three streets is placed under the patient's cot on the side of his head, with a bread-baking pan placed inverted over it. The slipper of a female is then placed inverted over the pan. In the early morning, the dust is thrown away at the crossing, from where it was procured. This is done for three nights consecutively. Another charm is to wave an unburnt mud-brick over the patient and throw it in a ruined and unprotected well. Some people wave alum around the head of the patient, place it in the cooking place and then throw it in the morning at a junction of three streets. The most common practice is to light a flour-paste lamp (*dia*) in the presence of the patient after all the other members of the family have withdrawn, wave it round the patient, and then take it under the cover of a head-dress to a drain and place it there : it is believed that if any person happens to see it burning, the disease will be transferred to him.

A charm for the patient suffering from lumbago consists in taking him to a junction of three streets where an old expert woman putting a pestle in the cloth fastened as girdle round the waist, turns it tightly. When she takes it out, she asks the patient to run some distance, and says: "Run out so that the lumbago may be cured". This is done at two consecutive evenings, and the morning that falls in between.

In a case of jaundice, small pieces of a branch of the *kandi* tree are tied in a thread and worn by the patient as a necklace. Some people take oil and water to an expert who reads incantations over the patient after everybody has withdrawn from the place.

In the case of inflammation of the eye (*anri*), the patient goes to the house of a neighbour at night when all are asleep and knocks at the door. If any person from inside asks about his identity, he replies that he is *Anri* mother which is transferred from him to the person inside. This is done for three consecutive nights and naturally at different doors. *Anri* is also believed to be cured by reading incantations on a winnowing fan which is symbolic of cleanliness or by applying an iron bolt (*karo*) at the place of inflammation, saying, "Let there be no inflammation of the eye, but to the iron: Why should anybody's eye be inflammed?"

In the case of a child suffering from diarrhoea, a shoe after touching it to the ground at the junction of three streets, is struck thrice against the arms of the child. -

In case of a dog bite, seven shoe-blows with dust are given at the place of injury.

If the child suffers from excessive crying, it is not allowed to see the goats while returning from the jungle in the evening. Another rite connected with this is to wave charcoal and *juwari* grain round the child and throw them over the berry tree. Still another is to blow with force the bed clothes of the child over the tail of a cow.[12]

In the village Daleke in East Punjab, the villagers perform a special kind of *toona* to save their cattle from epidemics. This is performed by one of the Brahmins of Daleke. He sprinkles diluted milk (*kachi lassi*) in each house continuously for five days and also recites some *mantras*. He seals the village by fixing nails in its four corners. No cattle are allowed to leave or enter the village. The Brahmin then erects a gate with *neem* leaves and places an earthen pitcher containing leaves near it over which *mantras* have been recited. All the cattle in the village are made to pass through the gate. The Brahmin keeps on reciting *mantras* and sprinkling *kachi lassi* as they pass through the gate. This ceremony is believed to immunize the cattle against any epidemic. No hearth is ignited in the village when this ceremony is being performed. The Brahmin conducting this *toona* gets one seer of grain from each family in the village for his labours.[13]

EVIL EYE

Whiffing at the face of the affected person by the exorcist who recites spells, and wearing of charms and amulets, are remedies in the case of evil-eye. Sometimes a little water is taken and the exorcist blows over this; some of this water is then taken in the palm and sprinkled over the face of the patient. The rest is given to the patient to drink. Preventive measures are also taken against the evil eye by putting a black dot on the face of the child.

MULTIPLE TREATMENT

When a person falls ill in a village, he takes the help of the following agencies in the order mentioned: House-hold herbals available in the kitchen, propitiation and worship of God and gods, consultation of the elders, friends, neighbours; consultation of the temple priest, local *ojha*, any of the local specialists such as the bone-setter, wound-and-boil specialist or a thorn-puller, the local *vaids* or *hakims*, practitioners of modern medicine inside the village, usually a compounder, and then the practitioners of modern medicine outside the village. Many a time, the help of more than one of the above agencies is taken at a time and the treatment prescribed by them applied simultaneously. A case of dog-bite goes to the local village specialist. Not finding him satisfactory, he goes to a specialist in another village or town. He gives him water to drink, and this water mixed with clay is applied locally as well. Finding this also unsatisfactory, he takes the advice of friends and neighbours who ask him to go to a place situated on a river bank. He takes a bath there on Sunday and on the next Tuesday. He takes with him parched grain flour (*satva*) and jaggery (*gur*) which he gives to the dogs roaming about on the river bank. The river clay is pasted on his wound and he is required to cross the shallow river seven times on each of the two days. Finally he takes bath in the river. An exorcist removes the poison of the dog-bite by moving an iron-rod seven times round the wound, reciting incantations. When his condition deteriorates, he returns to his village and consults a local compounder. He advises him to take injections at a nearby hospital. The patient goes there, but by that time it is too late. He has already developed symptoms of hydrophobia in which almost nothing can be done to save the patient.

An example of the multiple lines of treatment followed in the villages, is the list of prescriptions for an eye infection : The first is the incantation of sacred *mantra* ; the second, the application of the milky juice of a species of the yellow thistle (Argemone mexicana) ; the third, the juice of Acalypha indica ; the fourth, paste of a weed ; the fifth, drops of seasalt water poured into the nose ; the sixth, drops of green ginger water put into the nose ; the seventh, smoke of a locally made cigarette puffed into the eyes ; the eighth, juice of green chilli applied to the eyes (not to be administered in the case of a child); the ninth, a ladle of wood wetted and then rubbed against a stone till it yields juice which is applied to the eyes ; the last, a recipe compounded of garlic, white *jawar*, cardamom and sprouts of a spring shrub ; this concoction is chewed, and its scent is directed at the eyes. Some of these prescriptions are tried one after another or even simultaneously.[14]

A list of different prescriptions for each disease[15] that are followed in a south Indian village is as follows :

Disease	*Prescriptions*
Smallpox :	Propitiate the goddess Dyamavva (Devi) and offer a gift of oil and *ghee* (clarified butter) for 9 or 11 days.
Chickenpox :	Take a hot oil-bath and burn incense (Bdellium) until the patient feels suffocated.
Measles :	Smear the patient with red earth and expose to the hot sun. Give bath in the evening.
Whooping cough :	Worship the goddess Dyamavva and offer oil and *ghee*.
	Tie the magic charm containing the *molucca* bean round the neck or the talisman round the arm.
Cholera :	Community worship of the goddess Dyamavva. Before sunrise go three times round the Calotropis gigantia and worship the tree on behalf of the patient. Silently approach a tree used by someone for committing suicide and take its bark to make a magical string to be worn by the patient. Give a mixture of the juice of the waved leaved-fig tree (Ficus infectoria) and goat's milk. Mixture of butter milk and camphor. Drink half a cup every three hours. Give a liquid solution made of the horn of the spotted antelope.
Leprosy :	Worship the snake. Get bitten by a cobra. Worship the sun.
Barrenness :	Worship the Anisochilus carnosus wall tree ; worship the holy basil. Take a mixture of milk-hedge and dried garlic in appropriate measures. Wash the hair with saffron and eat porridge made of the great millet for 3 days during menstruation.
Rickets :	Undergo the ritual of ear piercing. Wear the ritual head or the ritual cord round the neck, or the talisman containing camphor and holy ash prepared by the specialist.

Paralysis : Take a root of the glomerus fig tree and mix it with inspissated juice of the Acacia catechu, betel-nut and cloves in appropriate measure; take as directed by the specialist. Take the mixture of seven garlics, seven black peppers, seven cloves and leaves of the Acacia farnesiana Willd.

Impotency : Worship the Hanuman monkey god. Take a mixture of sweet curds, leaves of the wild goose berry and the inside stalk of a banana tree.

Hysteria and Neurosis : Burn chilli until the afflicted person feels suffocated with its smoke. Tie a cord to the toes and go on tightening it by turning the rod until the patient feels immediate improvement.
Offer gifts and vows to the family and community gods.

Malaria : Decoction of the leaves of holy basil, Justeia adhatoda, margossa tree, Cocculus cordifolius.
Pound seven bed-bugs with seven betel leaves, seven peppers and cloves. Take the mixture.

Typhoid : Uproot the 'typhoid' tree grown in the woods. Take a decoction of Helleborus, black cumin, Morus indica.
Decoction of two betel leaves, betel nuts, seven garlics, seven red millets, seven peppers and seven cloves.
Hold a red hot weeding hook over the patient's head and pour water on the hook.

Headache : Apply to the forehead washing soda and lime.

Cough and Cold : Eat a ripe guava.
Eat a raw egg.
Before going to bed, eat parched rice and avoid drinking water.
Drink luke warm water with Eucalyptus oil.

Dysentery and Diarrhoea : Take a mixture of cardamom and clarified butter.
Mixture of the Bishop's weed, clarified butter and brown sugar.
Eat warm cooked rice with clarified butter in it.
Take a decoction of the leaves of Uraria lagopodioides.
Mixture of ripe banana, nutmeg and clarified butter.
Mixture of curbs and ripe lime.
Decoction of Asteracantha longifolia *Nees* and black cumin. Mixture of curds and leaves of pomegranate. Place a pestle in a water vessel and keep it above the navel so that the displaced nerve comes to its proper place.

Fever :	Apply a paste of the leaves of Justeia adhatoda, Acacia farnesiana Willd on the forehead. Take a decoction of black cumin. Warm the horn of an old ox and foment the buttocks. Apply a mixture of lime, indigo and citrus for 3 days. If it burns, apply curds.
Jaundice :	Wear a magical bead round the neck. Eat gum of Balanites. Eat leaves of the horse-radish.
Rheumatism :	Wear the ritual copper pendent or silver ring.
Eye inflammation :	Blow ritual formula on the afflicted area. Use drops of juice of the yellow thistle. Pour drops of liquid sea-salt or green ginger into the nostrils. Apply Acalypha indica juice to the afflicted area. Blow smoke of tobacco. For adults, apply the juice of green chilli. For children, apply a paste made of the wooden ladle.
Ear infection :	Use drops of the mixture of sulphur and coconut oil.
Scabies :	Use drops of cat's or rabbit's urine. Apply the milk of the yellow thistle. Apply a paste of garlic and leaves of Coriaceous obovate.
Wound :.	Apply a mixture of baby powder and vaseline.
Dog bite :	Pour ritual water on the afflicted part. Apply mud or lime.
Scorpion-bite :	Blow ritual formula on the afflicted part. Apply a mixture of coffee seeds and citron. Dip the afflicted part in kerosene. Apply a paste of a (music) record. Apply a paste of Achyranthes asperalin. Apply the juice of onion and citron. Pound tamarind stone and onion and apply it.
Snake-bite :	Soak the leaves of margosa, grown in the vicinity of the temple, in water and drink until vomiting starts. Eat tobacco until vomiting starts.

Knowledge possessed by the village specialists in different fields is not static ; it is enlarged or modified constantly. The village specialists go outside the village and bring back additional knowledge. Local men working in cities, community centres, teachers, etc. add to this knowledge. Yet the total effort of all this is only marginal. Older people and women in particular are strong forces against any change.

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4

Traditional Village Healers

There are several types of people in the village who practice the healing art. They are the grocer-herbalists, priests, exorcists, removers of evil eye, those who make charms, amulets and talismans, snake-bite curers, bone-setters, boil and wound experts, those who put salve in the eyes, thorn-pullers, barber-surgeons and village *dias* who deliver babies.

In comparison with the village magician who practises *jhar phook* only and has a rather low social standing in the village, the religious exorcist has a better reputation and social standing; the latter acquires the art through religious devotion. He is devotee of a village deity on whom he calls when he needs his help in curing patients. He may belong to any caste above the untouchable, although persons of a higher caste tend to be more successful in developing a large clientele. This profession generally runs in families.

Snake-bite curer, in the village or a group of villages, is among the most respected and trusted of all the local medical practitioners. He is respected because of his high ethics, self-sacrifice, and devotion to philanthropic duty. He learns the *mantras* that are believed to neutralize the snake venom from a teacher after undergoing great hardships for over a year or more; he sleeps on the floor, observes fasts and has to go through many ceremonies and rituals. His treatment is absolutely free. He leaves whatever work he is doing at any time of the day or night and goes to attend on a patient either in his own village or another. From the moment he is called, he eats or drinks nothing until a cure has been effected. He accepts no food or drink or anything else from the patient in the form of payment for his services. His only earthly rewards are praise and respect. He is, however, believed to earn a better place in the heavens.

How far he can stand the test of scientific method of investigation about the cure that he provides, is still a matter of opinion, which differs in different quarters.

There is another person in the village, who practises the art of preventive treatment. He is the *purohit,* the domestic priest. He belongs to the Brahmin caste. He advises his clients to perform different religious rituals as a means of obtaining good health, prosperity and children. He prescribes similar rituals for cures in the case of illnesses that are believed to have been caused by religious laxity or immorality. His prescriptions are: making pilgrimages, bathing in the Ganges, pouring water at the roots of sacred trees, praying, conducting sacrifices, offering charitable contributions to priests and beggars. He also forecasts events for his clients and gives astrological advice, which helps his clients time their activities according to astral omens so as to avoid illness and other misfortunes. Such priestly medical practice is regarded as ancient and sacred and notably more dignified than the acquired arts of the religious exorcist. In each of his prescriptions, he, however, includes a charitable gift such as food, money or a cow for himself.

The village magician, snake-bite curer and others like thorn-pullers, boil-healers and bone-setters, do not depend on their earnings through healing to run their households. They have their own vocations; mostly they are farmers and healing as a speciality is only a side-business for them.

The *vaids* and *hakims* are also there in the villages. They are whole-time workers in the art of healing and they earn their livelihood out of their profession. Their medicine includes neither religion nor magic. They treat by their special knowledge of the art of healing, mostly using herbal preparations. Actually they are not part of the village life, but they have adopted ways and means by which they are 'accepted' and even respected for their knowledge and the benefit they provide to the villagers.

A village *vaid* or *hakim* does not mind showing off that he possesses all the worthwhile knowledge about the human body and how it gets diseased. He gets hold of the pulse of the patient and observes it serenely and wisely for quite some time and it is through the knowledge gathered by this examination that he tells the patient not only of the disease that he is suffering from, but also what food he has taken in the morning or in the evening before. He asks no questions from the patient about his illness; this, he is expected to know himself. Moreover, he sometimes makes use of a stethoscope —whether he hears anything in, it is beside the point; he knows he can impress the villagers about his high grade technical knowledge by using it.

A village *vaid* or *hakim* gets his own herbal medicines, prepares them and dispenses them himself. For the villagers, this implies good knowledge and good care in making the medicines.

Furthermore, a village *vaid* or *hakim* does not ask for immediate payment for his medicines or examination; he can wait till the patient gets cured, and does not mind being paid in kind instead of cash. Many a time, he charges nothing from the poor people. He can afford it because he makes his own medicines which in the raw state are quite inexpensive. He is 'accepted' by the villagers because of his philanthropy, and his willingness to abide by village customs and traditions.

Besides the above, there may be a ward-boy or a compounder who works in the near-by dispensary in the city or town and practises modern medicine in the village in his spare hours. He is generally good in wound and boil healing as he observes some aseptic precautions and uses all the medicines generally employed in the dispensaries.

5

Traditional Village Healer vs. *Modern Medical Practitioner*

Great efforts are being made today to improve the health conditions of the people in the villages. Government administrators and some of the medical men see the major problem as the acquisition of sufficient supplies, equipment and personnel to carry out their work. They believe that just as a starving man is eager to accept food, so will the villagers be glad to accept their innovations, which in their view have a self-evident value; they feel that there exists a vacuum in the village into which they would be sucked in, once they set their foot into it.

Villagers, however, are not always eager to make use of the hospitals and clinics already at their disposal. Even free Government dispensaries do not attract many patients. The reason for such a situation seems to lie in the social and cultural traditions of the villagers.

Village people have their own beliefs about the causation and treatment of disease which are millennia old, but which fit in perfectly in their whole social structure and traditions. They have their own indigenous medical practitioners—herbalists, priests, exorcists, charm-sellers, snake-bite curers, bone-setters, sort of surgeons who cure boils and wounds, thorn-pullers, *dias* who deliver babies etc. They and their predecessors, generation after generation, have existed in the villages and practised their professions and proved useful to the people. Then there are village *hakims* and *vaids* who through centuries of practice have, also, more or less, become part of the village life. Medical concepts associated with the practice of these various kinds of healers prevail, and have so far prevailed, among the majority of the village people.

A study of the social structure of village life shows that the villagers recognize three great social realms: that of kinship and family, which is an area controlled by limitless demands and mutual trust ; that of the village and caste, which is an area, in part, controlled by particular obligations and formal respect; and that of the outside world, of government and the market place, which is an area controllable only by money and power—things which the ordinary villager scarcely possesses.

For the village people, Western medicine has existed upto now only in the third or outer realm beyond family and beyond caste and village. It has remained therefore in the realm of fundamental distrust and inspires more fear than confidence.

Let us see why the Western medicine and its practitioners have remained in the outer realm of village life and essentially 'unacceptable'. We will also see how the *vaids* and *hakims* who are, in fact, not part and parcel of the village life, got over this situation, and if there is anything in them which doctors can adopt so as to become 'acceptable' and be of use to the villagers who form the major portion of India's population.

Villagers are poor and illiterate. Agriculture, their main profession, extracts hard work out of them and even then the crops fail due to the vagaries of the weather. They depend on the mercy of God and lack a sense of security. They try to seek security in all walks of life. So far as their health is concerned, this security is provided to them by the traditional healers who are one of them. This security, a doctor cannot provide. His city dress and manners create a gap between him and his patients and villagers. He belongs to a gentlemanly class which as a whole is believed to exploit villagers by means of its technical superiority. There is little in the usual role assumed by the doctor which would tend to dissociate him in the eyes of the villagers from that class. While the patients and their relatives can talk to a village medical practitioner freely, this is not possible with the doctor; the latter creates fear, suspicion and lack of understanding.

Few villagers think of seeking medical treatment of any consequence without taking family members alongwith them. This we witness even when a village patient comes to consult a city practitioner. Indigenous medical specialists expect the family members to be present. The family members protect and look after the patient; they help the village specialist in his work; they remember directions for home treatment; they stand security as a group for the costs of the treatment. The family members in the village do what the nurse, orderly, secretary, receptionist, and social worker in the city clinics do. It is difficult to see how a doctor in an Indian village can manage to do without such essential family contributions. And yet he forbids anyone of the relations to enter his consultation room. According to him, he only needs to examine the patient; the relations are a nuisance in the way. This is why he cannot establish any understanding with the village patients; there is no 'personal touch', which would be so satisfying to the patient and his relations.

By refusing to see other members of the family, the doctor runs the risk of ignoring or annoying the members of the family whose say in all family matters is final. It is he or she who accepts or rejects everything including the particular medicine or the particular doctor or even the particular line of treatment. And such a person is not easily visible, as is the head of a modern family.

It is necessary to know, to recognize and to prevail upon that 'authoritative person' in the patient's family from another point of view as well. Individuals of the same village, even of the same family, often hold highly varied medical beliefs and follow widely divergent practices. To the same sort of cut or boil, one man will apply a hot mango leaf; his neighbour will apply a paste of wheat flour; his father will apply a poultice of cow-dung, while his wife believes firmly in the efficacy of plain butter. If the wife is under the thumb of her husband's mother, then that matriarch's proposal for a magical sweeping and blowing may be added to the other treatments. In a case of conflicting ideas, all advisers' suggestion for treatment may be applied in succession, or even all at once. Butter, dung, flour and leaf may be simply laid on in successive layers—a typical solution to the problem of insistent but varied individual beliefs. Since some kinds of Western medicine need to be applied alone and exclusively, the problem of finding an authoritative role for such treatment becomes all the more acute.

The 'confidential' doctor-patient interview cuts out the possibility of prevailing upon the crucial members of the patient's family.

A village patient has always been told by the traditional village practitioners what is wrong with him. He expects to be told about the cause of the disease: sorcery, witchcraft, evil spirit and things like that, and naming the cause is more than half the cure for him. On the other hand, when a village patient goes to a doctor he searches him with the questions like "What is wrong with you? What happened to you?" Such questions shatter the villager's confidence in the doctor. They come to regard the traditional practitioner to be wiser and cleverer than the doctor. That the latter possesses more technical skill, the village patient cannot realize. Whether a patient survives a disease or not, they say, depends upon his luck, not on the skill of the doctor. If a patient dies even in the hands of a village practitioner, he is not held responsible for it or considered inefficient; after all the life-time allotted to the patient was exhausted, or the evil spirits that attacked him were very powerful and recalcitrant.

When it comes to prescribing medicine, the village practitioner himself prepares the medicines for the patient. A doctor just writes down a prescription and either a dispenser makes it or he buys it from somewhere. The villagers thus regard a doctor as being so inefficient as not to be capable of making the medicine himself; on the other hand, they develop a lot of faith in the village practitioner and in the efficacy of his medicine because it has been made by the blessed hands of the practitioner. They believe firmly in the 'virtue of touch'.

A villager loses his faith in the doctor when the latter asks for money just for his advice without giving the medicines or waiting for the cure. The villagers do not find in the doctor the faith-inspiring dedication of the village snake-bite curer or of the philanthropic *hakim* or *vaid*. Even looking at the matter technically, the villager argues, if the doctor is sure of his diagnosis and his prescription, then why should he object to payment after the success of the treatment has been proved ? If, on the other hand, the doctor is not sure, then how can the patient be sure ? The doctor's demands to be paid for a mere technical performance are like the petty demands of the magician and the priest. At the same time, the doctor's diagnosis has none of the objective therapeutic value that inheres in the expressive treatment conducted by the magical and religious practitioners. The patient who is required to pay the doctor before he has been cured is left with a sense of financial loss, a suspicion of the doctor's moral integrity, and his own doubt about ever being cured. He starts suspecting the doctor of the intention of unnecessarily prolonging the treatment so as to fleece him.

On the other hand, the village practitioner is associated with highly cherished qualities of piety, personal sympathy and philanthropy.

Even while the villager has to pay the traditional practitioner, he need not pay in a lump sum. He may pay a nominal amount at the time of getting the medicine but the major part he pays after the cure is achieved, and this is more in the form of his gratitude to the healer than as his fees. Yet the traditional healer is no loser in the process.

The above discussion makes it amply clear that it is not enough to bring good medicines and efficient hygienic techniques to these country people. Before they can take effect, they must be 'accepted' and this will never come about so long as a wide gulf separates the thinking and the experience of the doctors from that of their village patients. One can scarcely expect village people to change their whole beliefs in order to see eye to eye with a western-trained doctor in the small sphere of medicine.

When physicians or public health workers go to work in the countryside or in a tribal region, they must keep in mind that people in all cultures believe that their way of life is best, natural, logical and that anything new is irrational and illogical. They need to keep in mind that their success will be neither in looking down upon the way of life of other people nor will it be in rediculing their systems of belief or customs, but in showing respect for cultural differences. This does not mean reconciling oneself to folk notions of disease. What is important is to recognise that rational and non-rational are culturally determined. What may be non-rational to us might be the only or best solution for the villagers and what sounds scientific to us may not be understandable to them.

In rural areas, the background of science on which modern medicine rests, is lacking and sometimes even rejected. If scientific medicine is to be carried into rural areas then it is necessary for medical practitioners to acquire considerable knowledge of the general concepts of culture and social organization and specific knowledge of rural life and culture.

If a doctor can couch his scientific advice in terms which fit in with the existing culture pattern, there is a greater chance that this advice will be followed. For example, in communities where diseases and medicines are classified as hot or cold, it might be helpful for the doctor not to challenge this belief openly. A mere statement to a patient that the medicine is 'hot' and will help to cure a 'cold' disease, may make for increased confidence.

The successful establishment of effective medicine here appears to depend largely on the degree to which scientific medical practice can divest itself of certain western cultural accretions and clothe itself in the social homespun of the Indian village.[1]

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